

HOW THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION USES THE INFORMATIONAL INSTRUMENT  
OF NATIONAL POWER TO INFLUENCE THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S  
STRATEGIC SECURITY POLICY

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by

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## ABSTRACT

HOW THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION USES THE INFORMATIONAL INSTRUMENT OF NATIONAL POWER TO INFLUENCE THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S STRATEGIC SECURITY POLICY by MAJ Dumitru Parfeni, 109 pages.

This thesis researches how the Russian Federation uses propaganda to influence the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy (SSP).

Since 2009, the Republic of Moldova's SSP is integration within the European Union (EU) and close cooperation with NATO. Russia considers Moldova's current SSP against its national interests. To influence Moldova's SSP, the Russian Federation uses propaganda. The objectives of Russian propaganda in Moldova are to disrupt the EU integration, instigate anti-Western sentiments, and popularize its official policy among the Moldovan. Media outlets, NGOs, Orthodox Church and political parties are the propaganda tools to carry propaganda messages to the target audience. Propaganda targets youth, Soviet nostalgic people, and Russian's compatriots in Moldova. Even though the Republic of Moldova achieved remarkable result in the integration and cooperation areas, public support for the current SSP is declining. According to the October 2016 polls, Moldova's public support for the current SSP dropped dramatically and registered the lowest ratings since 2009. This suggests the effectiveness of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova. If the current Moldova's government does not intervene to mitigate the influence of the propaganda, the SSP of the country may be changed in the future.

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## ACRONYMS

ABCI	Audit Bureau of Circulations and Internet
CCA	Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic instruments of National Power
DoD	Department of Defense
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EaP CSF	Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
GORM	Government of the Republic of Moldova
GUUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
IRI	International Republic Institute
IT	Information Technology
IW	Information Warfare
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
MSSR	Moldova Soviet Socialist Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commercial organization
NGO	Non-governmental organizations



NMS	National Military Strategy
NSC	National Security Concept
NSS	National Security Strategy
SIS	Security and Information Service
SSP	Strategic Security Policy
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### General Overview

In the last ten years, the international security environment has been marked by processes of transition from the unipolar world system of power distribution to a multipolar system with complex strategic implications. These transition processes are the result of the competition between the great powers such as the United States of America (USA), China, and the Russian Federation, and regional powers such as India, Brazil, and others who wish to assert themselves on a global scale. Moreover, these processes generate political, economic, military, informational, social, ethnic and cultural implications, which could likely lead to armed conflicts.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the challenges to the national security of countries are diversifying and intensifying.

On the international scale, there are armed conflicts generating dissension and deteriorating the global security environment. The war in Syria, the conflicts in the Middle East, the rise of the Islamic State, and the large-scale immigration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe have a direct impact on European security. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 and the armed conflict in Ukraine between the separatist forces of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's

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<sup>1</sup> Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, *Strategia Securitatii Nationale a Republicii Moldova* (Chisinau: Monitorul Oficial Nr. 170-175, art Nr: 499, 2011), 1-6.

Republics and the Ukrainian government are challenging the security situation in Black Sea Basin and becoming increasingly complex.<sup>2</sup>

Due to its geographic location, the Republic of Moldova is part of the security architecture of the Black Sea Basin. The Black Sea Basin is an area of interest for the major regional and international actors such as the Russian Federation, USA, European Union (EU), and NATO. In the last thirty years, this area was the site of post – Soviet military conflicts. Most of these conflicts were not satisfactorily resolved for all parties, and as a result, became frozen. Figure 1 shows the post – Soviet conflicts.



Figure 1. The post – Soviet conflicts

Source: Patrick Jackson, “Ukraine crisis: Frozen conflicts and the Kremlin,” *BBC*, September 10, 2014, accessed April 14, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29078541>.

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<sup>2</sup> MOD Republic of Moldova, *National Defense Strategy. Provizoriu* (Chisinau: MOD Republic of Moldova, 2016), 5.

These frozen conflicts (regions: Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh) and current conflicts (e.g. Ukraine) directly influence the area's security architecture in the Black Sea Basin which encourages regional states to invest more in its security and defense.<sup>3</sup>

The Republic of Moldova is adjusting its national defense and security system by taking account of the security developments in the region and globe. Based on the global and regional security challenges and its national interests, the Republic of Moldova's government decided in 2009 to pursue EU membership. The EU is a politico-economic union of twenty-eight member states that are located in Europe. It has developed a single integrated market through a standardized system of laws that apply to all member states. EU's policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital within its internal market. On June 27, 2014, the EU and the Republic of Moldova's government signed the Republic of Moldova-European Union Association Agreement.<sup>4</sup> This agreement commits the Republic of Moldova to economic, judicial, and financial reforms to converge its policies and legislation with those of the EU.

Furthermore, since 2009 the Republic of Moldova's government has increased its cooperation with NATO via the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) Republic of Moldova-NATO. The IPAP Republic of Moldova - NATO outlines the objectives and the communication framework for dialogue and cooperation between both parties. As a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>4</sup> EU-Moldova, "Moldova-EU Association Agreement," accessed January 7, 2017, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5410/moldova-eu-association-agreement\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5410/moldova-eu-association-agreement_en).

neutral state, the Government of the Republic of Moldova (GORM) pursues the implementation of the IPAP to optimize the process of reorganization and modernization of its national security and defense sector following the new developments and requirements of the current security environment.<sup>5</sup> The official strategic security policy (SSP) of the GORM is to integrate with the EU and cooperate with NATO.<sup>6</sup> Because of its SSP, the Republic of Moldova is often at the forefront of political tensions between the EU and the Russian Federation and faces anti-Western protests and local referendums.

### Problem Overview

The threat of coercion against the GORM is real. The Russian Federation exerts pressure on the GORM and its population by diplomatic, economic, military, social, and especially, informational means.<sup>7</sup> For instance, on October 6, 2016, the speaker of the Republic of Moldova's parliament, Andrian Candu, accused the Russian Federation government of meddling in his country's politics ahead of the 2016 presidential election. Candu told The Associated Press that leaders of the government of the Republic of Moldova suspected the Russian Federation of "manipulating media outlets and doing propaganda" to sabotage the Republic of Moldova's aspiration to join the EU and re-orient its SSP toward the Russian - led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The EEU is an

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<sup>5</sup> Republic of Moldova - NATO, *Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) Republic of Moldova - NATO 2014-2016* (Chisinau, 2014), 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, *Strategia Securitatii Nationale a Republicii Moldova*, 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6.

economic union of states composed of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.<sup>8</sup>

The Republic of Moldova's current political, economic and social instability makes its government and people vulnerable to external and internal influence.<sup>9</sup> For instance, in February 2015, in the South of Moldova, the already autonomous Gagauz region conducted a referendum and "decided" they wanted to integrate into the EEU.<sup>10</sup> In May 2015, in the North of Moldova, the ethnic Russian minority wanted to conduct a referendum regarding the local autonomy of the Balti municipality.<sup>11</sup> In September 2016, the former "president" of the separatist region of Transnistria, Yevgeny Shevchuk, called for secession from Republic of Moldova and unification with the Russian Federation, citing an unrecognized referendum held in 2006. Neither Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation nor the international community recognized the legitimacy of this referendum. According to the 2006 referendum result, 98.07 percent of the people from

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<sup>8</sup> Alison Mutler, "Moldova Official Says Russia Meddling in Presidential Race," *U.S News*, October 4, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-10-04/moldova-official-says-russia-meddling-in-presidential-race>.

<sup>9</sup> Penza News, "Politicians and Experts Make Pessimistic Predictions about Moldova's Future—Analysis," *Eurasiareview*, June 20, 2016, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/20062016-politicians-and-experts-make-pessimistic-predictions-about-moldovas-future-analysis>.

<sup>10</sup> RadioFreeEurope, "Gagauzia Voters Reject Closer EU Ties for Moldova," accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-gagauz-referendum-counting/25251251.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Jurnal.md, "Referendum in Bălți Regarding the Local Autonomy of the Municipality," May 26, 2015, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://jurnal.md/en/politic/2015/5/26/referendum-in-balti-regarding-the-local-autonomy-of-the-municipality/>.



that region expressed their willingness to secede from the Republic of Moldova and join into the Russian Federation.<sup>12</sup> Collectively, this illustrates the political instability in Moldova, which is targeted by Russian Federation propaganda.

The goal of this research is to determine how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy. The research paper is composed of six steps. The first step defines the context to get a better understanding of the Republic of Moldova's SSP. The second step describes the objectives that the Russian Federation seeks to meet by using the informational instrument of national power within the Republic of Moldova. The third step describes the means the Russian Federation uses to achieve its objectives. The fourth step describes the Russian Federation's target audience in the Republic of Moldova. The sixth step describes what media and special techniques Russia uses to influence its target audience in Moldova. The final step outlines the effects of the Russian Federation's use of informational instrument of national power against the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

#### Primary Research Question

How the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy?

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<sup>12</sup> Damien Sharkov, "Moldova's Transnistrian Separatists Urge Russia Annexation," *Newsweek*, September 9, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/moldovas-transnistrian-separatists-call-join-russia-496931>.

### Secondary Research Questions

What are the objectives of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova?

What assets does the Russian Federation use to achieve its objectives regarding propaganda?

Who is the Russian Federation targeting with propaganda?

What media and special techniques are the Russian Federation using to disseminate propaganda?

What are the effects of the Russian Federation's propaganda on the Republic of Moldova's SSP?

### Assumptions

The following assumptions are relevant and appear to be valid:

1. The GORM will not change its SSP in the next ten years, which means that the government will continue to adjust the economic, judicial, and financial sectors and to converge its policies and legislation to those of the EU.
2. The Republic of Moldova, in the next ten years, will remain constitutionally neutral (will not join any military block or alliance). The country will continue to reform and modernize its national security and defense sector following the developments and requirements of the current security environment.  
  
Moreover, the Republic of Moldova will increase its cooperation with NATO via IPAP Republic of Moldova – NATO.
3. The Russian Federation will maintain its current foreign policy, which means that its government will continue to consider the Republic of Moldova part of

its sphere of influence. Furthermore, the Russian Federation will continue to use all instruments of national power to pressure the Republic of Moldova's government to change its SSP.

4. The Transnistrian frozen conflict will not be resolved in the next ten years.

This means that the Russian Federation's government will continue to ignore and undermine the Republic of Moldova's neutrality by stationing its troops, equipment, and ammunition in Transnistria.

### Definitions of Key Terms

For this research paper, it is necessary to define and separate the main concepts and terms such as information warfare (war), propaganda, Eurasianism, and compatriots.

The NATO countries and the Russian Federation understand and apply the concept of Information Warfare (IW) differently. The United States Department of Defense (DoD) considers information warfare to be a military instrument, which includes digital, cyber, and psychological operations. The goal of IW is to demoralize an opponent by controlling or influencing sources of information.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Russian Federation military doctrine characterizes modern warfare as the "Integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational, and other non-military measures nature, implemented with the extensive use of the protest potential of the population, and special operations forces."<sup>14</sup> The Russian *Information*

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<sup>13</sup> Isaac R. Porche III et.al., *Redefining Information Warfare Boundaries for an Army in a Wireless World* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Russian Federation, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: Russian Federation, 2014), 4.

*Security Dictionary* defines IW as “the actions taken to achieve information superiority by inflicting information damage to the opponent and maintain own information security. It is conducted during the war and peace.” Also, the same dictionary explains that the threat of IW in the global context is a factor of hidden military-political pressure and intimidation. It is capable of undermining the existing balance in the world.<sup>15</sup> The difference between these two approaches is that, while the West uses IW for military operations, the Russian Federation uses it in the time of peace parallel with political and economic pressure.

According to Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, propaganda is “a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”<sup>16</sup> Propaganda is part of information warfare. In its essence, propaganda is not a negative phenomenon. According to Joint Publication 1-02, propaganda is “any form of adversary communication, especially of a biased or misleading nature, designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly.”<sup>17</sup> Propaganda refers to influencing public opinion on a certain issue, person or a group of people, which can be positive or negative.

Propaganda can be negative when it promotes violence, xenophobia, racism, calls for war, or incites conflict. It can also be negative when it tries to influence public

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<sup>15</sup> М. А. Вус, et. al., *Словарь – Правочник по Информационной Безопасности* (Санкт-Петербург: СПИИРАН, 2014), 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 5th ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1- 02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 277.

opinion based on false and fake information.<sup>18</sup> The latter is the context in which this research paper analyzes the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova and how it attempts to influence Moldova's SSP.

Eurasianism is a Russian political movement that focuses on the geopolitical concept of Eurasia. The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation officially recognized the movement on May 31, 2001. The promoter of this concept is Aleksandr Gelyevich Dugin, a Russian political scientist. According to him, Eurasia and Russia remain the staging areas for a new anti-bourgeois, anti-American revolution. The new Eurasian empire (Russian strategic alliance with European Slavic and Middle Eastern states, primarily Iran) will be constructed on the fundamental principles of the common enemy: the rejection of Atlanticism (West Europe, United States and Canada), strategic control of the USA, and the refusal to allow liberal values to dominate the new empire's territory.<sup>19</sup> Based on this concept the Republic of Moldova should be part of the Russian Federation's new empire.

The Russian Federation's government defines the term compatriots broadly to include persons demonstrating commonality of language, history, cultural heritage, traditions and customs (with the Russian state). Also, it considers compatriots the direct relatives, persons living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation having, spiritual, cultural, and legal connections with (Russia), or persons whose direct relatives lived on

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<sup>18</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Aleksandr Dugin: A Russian Version of the European Radical Right?* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars, 2006), 1-7.

the territory of the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many ethnic Russians who had settled on the periphery of the Russian Republic of the Soviet Union found themselves displaced abroad. The Russian Academy of Sciences estimates that Russian ethnics that live abroad number approximately thirty million. The Russian Federation defends the rights and interests of thirty million (ethnic) Russians abroad and claims responsibility for 300 million Russian-speakers, and even embraces people who feel culturally close to Russia.<sup>20</sup>

### Limitations

The Russian Federation uses all of the instruments of national power - diplomatic, information, military and economical to exert pressure on the Republic of Moldova's government. This research focuses on how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument to influence the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

It is difficult to affirm that a specific message is propaganda. Measuring propaganda is difficult as well. Therefore, the researcher considers all messages that conform to the Russian conservative and nationalistic ideology to be direct or indirect manifestations of propaganda. The Russian Federation ideology is rooted in the ideas of retaining its traditional values such as Orthodox religion and unique identity of Russian World.

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<sup>20</sup> РФ, О государственной политике Российской Федерации в отношении соотечественников за рубежом (Федеральный закон N 179-ФЗ July 23, 2010), accessed February 23, 2017, [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_23178/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_23178/).

An individual or an organization can directly or indirectly distribute propaganda. Without having data recording the financial ties to the Russian Federation's institutions, it is hard to know the propagandist's genuine intentions. As the result, it is difficult to state whether an individual or an organization is an immediate target or distributor of Russian propaganda.

Demonstrating the immediate effects of propaganda is troublesome since it is hard to determine the number of people influenced by a propaganda message. Nevertheless, by examining the intensity of propaganda and changes in public opinion several conclusions can be made.

#### Delimitations

This research paper will not provide an answer for the issue, nor will it propose a certain course of action to address the problem. Such proposals and solutions require thorough mastery in particular areas, and the purpose of this paper is to determine the strategic implications of Russia's use of informational instrument to influence Republic of Moldova's SSP.

#### Summary

The global and, especially, the Black Sea Basin's security environment is challenged and changing because of a multitude of transition processes. Major powers are using the instruments of national power to protect their national interests. The Russian Federation's government uses all of its instruments, especially information, to exert pressure on the Republic of Moldova's government to change its SSP. This research paper uses Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-Step Framework to analyze how the Russian

Federation's government uses the information instrument of national power to influence the Government of the Republic of Moldova's SSP. It is obvious that Republic of Moldova's government, with all its political, social, economic and security problems, is vulnerable to the Russian Federation's information influence. However, that does not mean that the Republic of Moldova's government should not oppose and attempt to mitigate the Russian Federation's information influence.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to determine how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy.

There are sufficient sources (books, journals, monographs) written on topics related to the Russian Federation's use of instruments of national power, especially information, to influence the post-Soviet countries. There are also relevant resources, which describe what strategies the Republic of Moldova's government should take to reduce its vulnerabilities against external information influence. Included in this research paper are sources with different perspectives (US, EU, Republic of Moldova, and the Russian Federation) to make a qualitative analysis and avoid biases. The literature review is structured into four distinct sections:

1. Information instrument of national power
2. Russian Federation's national documents related to information
3. Propaganda Sources
4. Republic of Moldova's Strategic Documents

#### Information Instrument of National Power

Information is one of the four instruments of national power according to Joint Publication (JP) 3-13 *Information Operations*. Terms such as "information," "propaganda," "information warfare" are frequently used to describe information as an

instrument of national power. Commonly, these three terms cover actions, activities, symbols, thoughts, beliefs, and media that an actor uses to influence public opinion, both at home and abroad.<sup>21</sup> For instance, actors can use media outlets such as radio, television broadcasts, public speeches, leaflets, and newspapers to “win the hearts and minds” of people.<sup>22</sup> These are examples of tools and methods, which actors can use to disseminate information to influence public opinion. The next two references examine the terms “propaganda,” and “information warfare” in more detail.

Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell in *Propaganda and Persuasion* provide a model to analyze propaganda and argue that propaganda is a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist. Persuasion is interactive seeking to satisfy the needs of both the persuader and those persuaded. Moreover, it depicts how elements of informative and persuasive communication are incorporated into propagandistic communication, thus distinguishing propaganda as a specific class of communication. According to the authors, propaganda can create changes in both public opinion and behavior in a positive or negative way. If propaganda seeks to change the public opinion and behavior negatively, it is called black propaganda.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-5.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Haight, “Propaganda, Information and Psychological Warfare: Cold War And Hot” (Holdings Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, 2008), 7-10, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=7125137D5F40780D71927E5DB5788EE4?doi=10.1.1.190.2199&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, 4-8.

A. Kiyuna and L. Conyers in *Cyberwarfare Sourcebook* describe information warfare (IW) as a concept, which uses the information and communication technology in pursuit of a competitive advantage over the opponent,

Information warfare may involve the collection of tactical information, assurance(s) that one's information is valid, spreading of propaganda or disinformation to demoralize or manipulate the enemy and the public, undermining the quality of opposing force information and denial of information-collection opportunities to opposing forces.<sup>24</sup>

Based on this definition propaganda is part of informational instrument that is used to demoralize and manipulate the enemy public opinion. The Russian official documents approach IW and propaganda from the same perspective.

#### The Russian Federation's Strategic Documents

The following paragraphs explain briefly the Russian Federation concepts, views, and documents related to information as an instrument of national power from different perspectives, starting with official government and military documents.

The Russian Federation's *National Security Strategy (NSS)* is the most important official document that speaks about information as an instrument of national power. Section Four of the Russian NSS defines the use of information to shape and implement the state policy internally and externally to safeguard its national security.<sup>25</sup> The authors of the NSS assert that information is a tool, among others (political, diplomatic, military,

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<sup>24</sup> A. Kiyuna and L. Conyers, *Cyberwarfare Sourcebook* (Creative Commons, 2015), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Russian Federation, *Russian Federation's National Security Strategy* (Moscow: Russian Federation Presidential Edict 683, 2015), 3-8.

and economic), that states can use to improve their national security. Included in the NSS is the term “strategic preemption” which implies the development and application of a complex system, composed of political, diplomatic, military, economic, informational, and other measures that a state uses to deter or diminish a threat from attacking it. Furthermore, the Russian Federation’s NSS expresses some concerns that other countries (the document does not mention what countries) are ahead of Russian Federation in important respects (have more developed capabilities), such as IW.<sup>26</sup> According to the NSS, the IW is a defensive tool that the Russian Federation can also use as part of its strategic preemption (which means offensively) and which needs to be improved.

Another Russian Federation official document that embraces information as an instrument of national power is the *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*. This paper covers the nature and characteristics of modern wars and conflicts. It offers some examples, stressing the integrated use of military and nonmilitary means such as diplomatic, political, economic, and information.<sup>27</sup> The doctrine like the NSS emphasizes that the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces use information as a defensive tool, but that can be used preemptively to defend its national interests.

In 2011, the Ministry of Defense of Russian Federation released, the “Conceptual views on the activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the information space.” This document deals specifically with information warfare from a military perspective. According to the document, information warfare (*informatsionnaia voina*) is

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 3-7.

<sup>27</sup> Russian Federation, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, 3-5.

a “struggle between two or more state actors or non-state actors in the information space with the goal to damage information systems, processes or resources.”<sup>28</sup> One important point that the authors of the document describe is that the increasing use of information technology (IT) in military and civilian life over the past decade has made IW more important for the Russian Federation. It is a cheap and efficient tool that the Russian Federation can use to defend its national interests. Moreover, the authors state that IW is not a service or a branch of its own. It includes elements from intelligence, deception on the operational level (*operativnaia maskirovka*), electronic warfare, communications, protected and automated command and control, information management among staffs, and the defense of information systems from electronic warfare and computer network operations.<sup>29</sup> This document is important because it defines and describes IW’s elements and their importance. It does not describe the ways the Russian Federation uses it or is ready to use in the future.

General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of Staff of the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces, posits that the rules of war have changed. The “The Value of Science is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations” called the Gerasimov doctrine, highlights that “the nonmilitary means to achieve military and strategic end states have grown and, in many cases,

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<sup>28</sup> Ulrik Franke, *War by Non-Military Means: Understanding Russian Information Warfare* (Tallinn: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2015), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Министерство обороны РФ, *Концептуальные взгляды на деятельность Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации* (Министерство обороны РФ, 2011), 7.

exceeded the power of weapons and their effectiveness.”<sup>30</sup> General Gerasimov argues for asymmetrical actions that combine the use of Special Forces and information warfare. These measures create “a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state.”<sup>31</sup> They include military or hard power as well as shaping and controlling the narrative in public opinion, diplomatic outreach, military sales, intelligence operations, and strategic offerings of intelligence and military technology. Gerasimov contends that the lines between war and peace are blurred, and that nonmilitary means can be as or more effective than military force. He supports the use of IW between war and peace where it is the most efficient.<sup>32</sup> In the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) white paper, *Perceiving Gray Zone Indications* defines the space between war and peace as the “gray zone”.<sup>33</sup>

To summarize, the NSS, Military Doctrine and other official documents of the Russian Federation view information as an instrument of national power and all describe an environment where information warfare against the Russian Federation or its national interests is commonplace. All these documents have a defensive character and describe the information as a defensive tool. In addition, the Russian Federation’s official

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<sup>30</sup> Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations,” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier* 02 (2013): 23-29, accessed January 20, 2016, [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview\\_20160228\\_art008.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160228_art008.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>33</sup> USASOC Deputy Chief of Staff, G9, *Perceiving Gray Zone Indications* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 12.

documents reveal little information about how its government goes about using information as an instrument of national power against other countries.

### Propaganda Sources

The Russian Federation is one of the most important and influential economic and political partners of the Republic of Moldova. Despite this, in the last sixteen years, Republic of Moldova - Russian Federation relations have had a sinusoidal evolution marked by uncertainty and inconsistency. The two governments have different views on a number of SSP subjects. The lack of a common perspective on these and other topics has had an adverse impact on the mutual trust and sustainable partnership between the governments of these countries.<sup>34</sup> Because of different views, the Russian Federation uses the instruments of national power, especially information, to exert pressure on the Republic of Moldova's government.

The book *Război Informațional Tipizarea Modelului Agresiunii [Information Warfare as a Typical Aggression Model]* by Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, identifies how the Russian Federation uses the information as an instrument of national power to exert pressure on the governments of both the Republic of Moldova and Romania. The authors call the Russian Federation's use of the information instrument of national power as an information war. Furthermore, the book conveys in detail the means and ways that the

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<sup>34</sup> Victor Chirila, "Why a Strategic Partnership between Moldova and Russia Is Not a Realistic Option?" *Foreign Policy Association*, February 24, 2015, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://new.ape.md/2013/01/english-victor-chirila-why-a-strategic-partnership-between-moldova-and-russia-is-not-a-realistic-option-foreign-policy-association-ape-24-01-2013/?lang=en>.

Russian Federation conducts its information war in the Republic of Moldova, from the use of the media to political parties and NGOs.<sup>35</sup>

The report “Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-Strategies in Russian Propaganda” by Edward Lucas and Peter Pomeranzev was produced under the auspices of the Center for European Policy Analysis’ Information Warfare Initiative. The authors assert that the Russian Federation uses information as an instrument of national power in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to confuse, befuddle and distract public opinion. According to the report, the Russian Federation aim is to erode the Republic of Moldova’s integration with the EU and cooperation with NATO. To achieve these “the government of the Russian Federation exploits ethnic, linguistic, regional, social and historical tensions, and promotes anti-systemic causes, extending its reach and giving them a spurious appearance of legitimacy.”<sup>36</sup> For instance, on January 1, 2016, during the TV show (RenTV – RF TV channel) “Military secret” [Военная тайна] was made direct reference to the political situation in the Republic of Moldova. For instance, TV show presenter insisted on certain ideas such as “Romania occupied the Republic of Moldova and Moldovans are forced by EU to forget their national identity.”<sup>37</sup> Also, the presenter insisted that “Gagauzia belongs to Russia and accused Republic of Moldova of triggering

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<sup>35</sup> Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, *Război Informațional Tipizarea Modelului Agresiunii* (București: Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale Ion I.C. Brătianu al Academiei Române, 2016), 10-15.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Lucas and Peter Pomeranzev, “Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-Strategies in Russian Propaganda,” *Center for European Policy Analysis* (2016): 1.

<sup>37</sup> CCA, “Decizia nr. 9/44 din 29 martie 2016,” March 29, 2016, accessed February 23, 2017, [http://www.cca.md/files/D.9-44%20din%2029.03.2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.cca.md/files/D.9-44%20din%2029.03.2016_0.pdf).



the war in Transnistria in 1992.”<sup>38</sup> According to the presenter, the majority of Moldovans are Russophobes and they are obliged by the government to speak Romanian language. Also, the presenter highlighted that “Association Agreement between Moldova and EU is a betrayal of Russia, and USA and EU are promoting pro-war and hostile tendencies against Russia.”<sup>39</sup> This is just one example, which proves that the Russian propaganda promotes lies, disseminates truncated and taken out of context, hate and intolerance among citizens.

In the *EU strategic communications with a view to counteracting propaganda*, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) argues that the Russian Federation government uses information as a tool for propaganda. For instance, Russian Federation uses multilingual TV stations (e.g. *Russian Today*), pseudo news agencies and multimedia services (e.g. Sputnik), social media and internet trolls to challenge democratic values, divide Europe, gather domestic support in the target state and create the perception of failed states in the EU’s eastern neighborhood. According to EUISS, the Russian Federation is engaged in aggressive messaging and deceptive media campaigns in the Eastern Europe, albeit with distinct narratives, targets, and audiences.<sup>40</sup>

The above references support that Russian Federation uses propaganda to protect its interests in the eastern European countries. All three references agree that the Russian

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), *EU Strategic Communications with a View to Counteracting Propaganda* (Belgium: Think tank, 2016), 14-16.

propaganda is focused on providing anti- West messages to specific target audience. Often propaganda misleads its target audience by sending invented stories and myths that are not supported by facts.

### Republic of Moldova's Strategic Documents

The *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* ensures free access to information and this right cannot be restricted. In addition, it states that public authorities are obliged to provide factual information to the citizens on public affairs and matters of personal interest. The right to information should not be prejudicial to the protection of citizens or national security. Lastly, the Constitution states that the public media is obliged to ensure that factual information is provided to the public and is not subject to censorship.<sup>41</sup>

The *NSS of the Republic of Moldova* aims to focus the state institutions in performing their functions according to the Constitution. The strategy focuses on strengthening national security by maintaining the stability and continuity of the state, ensuring justice, social progress, and essential security elements. The NSS describes the threats that affect the vital interests of the country such as energy, food, environmental, demographic, and information.<sup>42</sup>

The *National Defense Strategy (NDS) of the Republic of Moldova* is a policy document that provides the basis for the national defense. In addition, the NDS

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<sup>41</sup> Republic of Moldova's Parliament, *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* (Chisinau: Monitorul Oficial no. 78 Article No. 140, 1994), 2-10.

<sup>42</sup> Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, *Strategia Securitatii Nationale a Republicii Moldova*, 2-5.

establishes the modalities of executing the functions of state institutions. The paper identifies propaganda as a risk to national security,

Foreign propaganda represents one of the gravest threats to national values and interests, reducing the society's trust in the national defense system institutions and their capacity to protect the country's territory and population. Propaganda, particularly the one manifested through various sources of information (mass media, social networks, etc.), favors the emergence of radicalism and extremist-terrorist actions.<sup>43</sup>

The document does not delineate who the propagandists are, their objectives or the messages they are sending. Furthermore, the NDS treats propaganda as an element of informational warfare. According to the NDS, propaganda manifests itself in media manipulation that has destructive potential and can negatively influence domestic public opinion, affect the SSP and harm the image of the GORM.<sup>44</sup>

### Summary

Numerous references describe information as an instrument of national power. Many resources from the EU and the Republic of Moldova explain how the Russian Federation uses information outside its borders to defend its national interests. These references use terms such as information, information warfare, and propaganda to describe the Russian Federation's use of the informational element of national power.

The researcher analyzes how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's SSP. To avoid

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<sup>43</sup> MOD Republic of Moldova, *National Defense Strategy, Provizorii* (Chisinau: MOD Republic of Moldova, 2016), 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

confusion, the research will focus on propaganda as part of the Russian Federation's informational instrument of national power.

Since 2009, the Republic of Moldova's SSP goals are integration of the country into the EU and cooperation with NATO. There are Republic of Moldova's official documents, which define and describe the SSP of the country, its goals, and its challenges.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Qualitative Approach

The method used for this study is qualitative propaganda analysis devised by Jowett and O'Donnell in *Propaganda and Persuasion*.<sup>45</sup> This approach facilitates answering the main research and all subsequent questions. First, this method is easily accessible and provides much information. The qualitative propaganda analysis helps the researcher to build on previously collected knowledge instead of having to go and find it. The goals of qualitative research are explanation and description. The following chapter introduces the research methodology of this paper.

#### Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-Step Framework

The research design is based on Jowett and O'Donnell's propaganda analysis framework. The researcher uses this framework to investigate how the Russian Federation uses the information instrument of national power against the Republic of Moldova's SSP. It requires looking at the Russian Federation's propaganda media and its messages, examine how the Republic of Moldova's audience responds to the propaganda, and conduct an overall analysis of the propaganda process.

The Jowett and O'Donnell's framework is a 10-step plan of propaganda analysis that uses a matrix designed to facilitate the examination of all the elements of the Russian

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<sup>45</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, 190.

Federation's information instrument of national power against the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

The Jowett and O'Donnell's propaganda analysis framework consists of 10 steps, which are:

1. Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign;
2. Context in which the Propaganda Occurs;
3. Identification of the Propagandist;
4. Structure of the Propaganda Organization;
5. Target Audience;
6. Media Utilization Techniques;
7. Special Techniques to Maximize Effect;
8. Audience Reaction to Various Techniques;
9. Counterpropaganda;
10. Effects and Evaluation.<sup>46</sup>

#### Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign

The first frame (step) Jowett and O'Donnell propose for examining propaganda is the ideology and purpose of the propagandist. According to this frame, the aim is to "achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."<sup>47</sup> Then the frame continues with the objectives to determine to what ends the campaign is designed to accomplish.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 289.

Jowett and O'Donnell suggest that analysts search for a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as for ways of perceiving and thinking that are agreed on to the point that they constitute a set of norms for the society, which dictate what is desirable and what should be done.<sup>48</sup>

### Context in which the Propaganda Occurs

According to the Jowett and O'Donnell, the context in which the propaganda message is designed not only affects the form the message takes but also the way in which the audience receives the messages. The authors point to several issues to consider when analyzing the context in which the propaganda occurs such as conflicts (past and present), the mood of the times, power struggles and the parties involved in those struggles. The propaganda analysts have to be aware of the events that have occurred. Moreover, it should be paid attention how the propagandist interpreted these events and what messages did he send.<sup>49</sup>

### Identification of the Propagandist

Jowett and O'Donnell believe that to determine the true motivations the analyst must identify the actual propagandist. According to the authors, the source is likely an institution or organization. There may be a single individual as the propagandist, but this person is often only an agent for the larger organization. The propaganda organization may readily disclose its identity, but in many cases, it operates in secrecy.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 292.

Misrepresentation of the source of the message is one sign of black propaganda or propaganda intended to deceive.<sup>50</sup>

### Structure of the Propaganda Organization

Propaganda originates from a strong, centralized, decision-making authority, argue Jowett and O'Donnell, which produces a consistent message throughout its structure. The authors offer several points to examine when evaluating the propaganda organization's structure. Formal rules, rituals, internal culture and membership makeup are all dimensions that can provide valuable information about the organizational chart. The structure also includes the articulation of specific goals and the means by which to achieve them. Furthermore, with regard to these goals, there may be specific objectives and means to achieve them.<sup>51</sup>

### Target Audience

The propaganda messages are aimed at the public that is most likely to be useful to the propagandist if it responds favorably. A propagandist selects where its messages should be sent in order to be more effective. The authors noted that the distribution mechanism could attract a ready audience to target.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 295.



### Media Utilization Techniques

This frame examines which media the propagandist employs. Modern propaganda may employ numerous media techniques to reach target audience including television or radio commercials, the internet, newspaper ads, flyers, direct mail, etc. While examining what media are being utilized, it is also important to examine musical slogans, melodies, pictures, graphics, colors, and symbols to understand how the propagandist uses them to facilitate the effect on targets. Also in describing media utilization, the analyst needs to examine the flow of communication and information as well as how the media receives and interprets the message.<sup>53</sup>

### Special Techniques to Maximize Effect

Propaganda employs a myriad of methods to influence the audience. There are seven special techniques such as bandwagon, plain folks, testimonial, glittering generalities, name-calling, transfer and card stacking. In discussing the techniques of propaganda, the four basic criteria of successful propaganda are that it must be seen, understood, remembered, and acted on.<sup>54</sup>

### Audience Reaction to Various Techniques

To analyze propaganda, reactions of the target audience to the propaganda campaign must be examined. Most important is evaluating and determining the behavior

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 299.

of the target audience. This includes voting, joining organizations, donating or any other form of action about the desired intent of the propaganda.<sup>55</sup>

### Counterpropaganda

Jowett and O'Donnell explain counterpropaganda as existing to oppose the efforts of the original propaganda message. The counterpropaganda can be open or covert and could take as many shapes as propaganda. The authors suggested that analysts should look closely at whether it is evident to the public that counterpropaganda exists to oppose propaganda.<sup>56</sup>

### Effects and Evaluation

The most important part of analyzing the effects and evaluations of the campaign is determining whether the purpose and ideology have been fulfilled. It must also be determined whether specific goals and objectives were met and if they were not, why. To examine whether the campaign was effective, the analyst needs to look for the acceptance and adoption of the propagandist language and behavior, the passage of legislation, or membership in specific organizations involved with the campaign.<sup>57</sup>

### Applying the Jowett and O'Donnell (modified) 10-Step Framework

In analyzing a campaign, Jowett and O'Donnell proposed a series of questions to ask for each of the 10 steps in the propaganda analysis framework. He researcher uses a

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.,.

modified Jowett and O'Donnell framework to answer the main and secondary research questions (SRQ).

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell's steps are used to answer the first of the secondary research question.

SRQ1: What are the objectives of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova?

#### Step 1: Context

Q# 1.1a. Which is the official SSP of the Republic of Moldova?

Q# 1.1b. What major events have occurred in the Republic of Moldova related to its SSP, and how the Russian Federation media interpreted them?

Q# 1.1c. Why does the Republic of Moldova follow the actual SSP?<sup>58</sup>

#### Step 2: Purpose and objectives

Q# 1.2a. Which is the purpose of the Russian Federation's propaganda?

Q# 1.2b. Which are the objectives of the Russian Federation's propaganda?

Step 3 is used to answer the second of the secondary research questions.

SRQ 2: What assets does the Russian Federation use to achieve its objectives regarding propaganda?<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 297.

### Step 3: The Structure of the Propaganda Organization

Q# 2.3a. What assets are the Russian Federation using to meet its objectives regarding propaganda?

Q# 2.3b. What are their strategies to foster communication?

Q# 2.3c. How do the assets disseminate the messages?

Q# 2.3d. Is the target audience denying the information or not?<sup>60</sup>

Step 4 helps to answer the third secondary research question.

SRQ 3: Who is the Russian Federation targeting with propaganda?

### Step 4: Target Audience

Q# 3.4a. Who in the Republic of Moldova is the target audience of the Russian Federation's propaganda?

Q# 3.4b. How and why was the audience selected?<sup>61</sup>

Step 5 is used to answer the fourth of the secondary research questions.

SRQ 4: What media and special techniques are the Russian Federation using to disseminate propaganda?

### Step 5: Media and Special Techniques

Q# 4.5a. Which media techniques are used?

Q# 4.5b. Which media techniques are used?

Q# 4.5c. What messages are media passing on?

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 298.

Q# 4.5d. Are the messages consistent with the purpose?

Q# 4.5e. What is the overall impression left with the audience? <sup>62</sup>

The last step is used to answer the fifth of the secondary research questions.

SRQ 5: What are the effects of the Russian Federation's propaganda on the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy?

#### Step 6: Effects and Evaluation

Q# 5.6a. Has the Russian Federation's propaganda purpose accomplished? If not, why?

Q# 5.6b. Have the Russian Federation's propaganda objectives been accomplished?<sup>63</sup>

#### Summary

This research paper will use a qualitative approach to conducting an analysis research of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, the paper uses Jowett and O'Donnell's propaganda analyses 10-step framework. This chapter included a detailed description of the Jowett and O'Donnell's modified framework and the way the researcher intends to answer the main and secondary research questions. It also described each step in the framework, as well as suggested questions to ask and answer when conducting the analysis. Chapter IV will describe the results of the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 300.

Russian Federation's propaganda analyses in the Republic of Moldova. It will explain the findings of each step within the Jowett and O'Donnell's modified framework.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to reveal how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's SSP. The research paper is composed of six steps. The first step defines the context to get a better understanding of the Republic of Moldova's SSP. The second step describes the objectives that the Russian Federation seeks to meet by using propaganda within the Republic of Moldova. The third step describes the means the Russian Federation uses to achieve its objectives. The fourth step describes the Russian Federation's target audience in the Republic of Moldova. Then the paper reveals what media and special techniques Russian Federation propaganda uses to influence its target audience in Moldova. The final step outlines the effects of the Russian Federation's use of propaganda on the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

#### Road to the Problem

After the so-called "Color Revolutions" (a series of protests and political events that took place in Ukraine between November 2004 and January 2005), Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova started to develop closer cooperation with EU and NATO.<sup>64</sup> In 2009, in Moldova the so-called Twitter revolution took place. It catalyzed civil society's

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<sup>64</sup> Levan Avalishvili, "Kremlin's Information War against Georgia," *Policy Paper*, August 22, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://idfi.ge/public/upload/Meri/Giorgi%20Lomtadze/Policy%20Paper.PDF>.

involvement in the country's political life and challenged for the first time Russian influence in the region. Occurring on April 7, 2009, the Twitter revolution consisted of protests against the Moldovan parliamentary election. These protests were organized using the online social network service Twitter. The protests mobilized the population to vote against Moldova's Communist Party (PCRM) and elect a parliamentary coalition composed of three pro-EU political parties. As a result, the integration with the EU and cooperation with NATO became the main goal of the GORM's SSP.<sup>65</sup>

In 2014, as the result of the November 30 parliamentary elections, 54.7 percent of the Moldovan population supported the current strategic security policy. Finally, in October 2016, Igor Dodon, the leader of the Socialist Party and an ardent supporter of Russia and the EEU became the new President of the Republic. He won the presidential election with 52 percent of the vote and promised to change the current SSP in two years. In 2018, parliamentary election will take place and Dodon's political party intends to win the majority which means more than fifty seats in the parliament (in the Republic of Moldova the parliament decides the foreign policy). In October 2016 polled show that the population's support for the current SSP was declining and was below 50 percent. The Government blamed the Russian Federation propaganda for the 2016 results and the declining support for the current SSP.<sup>66</sup> At this point, it is important to understand how

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<sup>65</sup> Ministerul Afacerilor Externe și Integrării Europene al Republicii Moldova, "Relațiile RM-UE," accessed April 14, 2017, <http://www.mfa.gov.md/despre-relatiile-rm-ue/>

<sup>66</sup> Stratfor, "Igor Dodon promite o nouă politică externă," *MoldNova*, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://moldnova.eu/ro/stratfor-igor-dodon-promite-o-noua-politica-externa-10566.html/>



the Russian Federation uses propaganda to influence Moldova's SSP. In order to better understand the problem, some context must be provided.

### Context

Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the EU began in 2005. On February 22, 2005, the EU and the government of the Republic of Moldova signed the EU-Moldova action plan within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP is a foreign relations instrument of the EU which seeks to tie those countries to the east and south of the EU to the Union. The plan laid out the strategic objectives of cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the EU.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the Russian Federation placed an economic embargo on Moldova's wine that seriously affected the country's economy.<sup>68</sup>

Next, in 2008, the Republic of Moldova became a member of the Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. This EU initiative governs its relationship with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The EaP intended to provide a venue for discussions between the EU and its eastern neighbors on trade, economic strategy, travel agreements.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Republic of Moldova Official Website, "European Integration," accessed March 12, 2017, <http://www.moldova.md/en/europa/>

<sup>68</sup> C. J. Chivers, "A Russian 'Wine Blockade' Against Georgia and Moldova," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2006, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/06/world/europe/06russia.html>.

<sup>69</sup> Republic of Moldova Official Website, "European Integration," accessed February 12, 2017, <http://www.moldova.md/en/europa/>.

In 2009, integration with the EU and cooperation with NATO officially became part of the Republic of Moldova's SSP. To become a candidate for EU integration the government Moldova started to fulfill the EU requirements. First, it joined the EaP initiative. Second, the Republic of Moldova started negotiations with the EU on the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). Then, the government initiated the Visa Liberalization Dialogue with the EU and became a full-fledged member of the European Energy Community that includes all of the EU member states and the Western Balkan countries.<sup>70</sup>

A major milestone between EU and Moldova was reached in 2014, when Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine signed the AA, including the DCFTA. The DCFTA is a three free trade area established between the EU and Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine respectively. The DCFTAs are part of each country's EU Association Agreement. They allow each country access to the EU's internal market in selected sectors and grant EU investors. The agreement with the Republic of Moldova was ratified in July 2016.<sup>71</sup> The AA aims to deepen political and economic relations between Moldova and the EU, such as Moldova's entry into the EU internal market. In addition, the DCFTA not only improve trade and investment opportunities but also assist the Republic of Moldova in trade-related reforms. This will facilitate Moldova to recover and

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<sup>70</sup> European Commission, "European Commission," accessed March 14, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/moldova/>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

integrate its economy with the EU market, which will allow accessing the world markets.<sup>72</sup>

In 2014, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova enjoyed the first benefits of the EU - the Moldova Visa Liberalization Action Plan implementation, by being able to travel to the Schengen Zone visa-free and EU states that are not part of the Schengen Zone. This was the result of the EU's travel policy. The EU - the Moldova Visa Liberalization Action Plan strengthened the EU's popularity and increased its attractiveness among Moldovan citizens. Once the visa-free policy with the EU entered into force the number of requests for Republic of Moldova's passports from the citizens residing in the Transnistrian region doubled.<sup>73</sup> This means that the population of the Republic of Moldova especially from the Transnistrian and Gagauzia regions, started to feel the benefits of the country's SSP having the ability to travel within the EU without visa, which challenged the Russian Federation's influence in Moldova.

The European Energy Community's activity started on July 1, 2006. It aimed to create a common market of electricity and gas between the EU and non EU-countries. The Republic of Moldova became a full member of the European Energy Community in May 2010. The accession to the European Energy Community is vital for the country, which will diminish the Russian gas monopoly on Moldova. The accession implies gradual integration of the Republic of Moldova's power lines and natural gas pipelines

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Victoria Bucataru, "Moldova Still at a Crossroads: Is the European Path Irreversible?" in *The different faces of "soft power,"* ed. Toms Rostoks and Andris Spruds (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2015), 141-143.

with those of the EU. In addition, the regulations of the European Commission and EU standards in the field of energy become mandatory for producers, exporters, importers and distributors of electricity and natural gas from the Republic of Moldova.<sup>74</sup> As a result, the integration of the power lines and natural gas pipelines with those of the EU will create stability in the country's energy sector and avoid Russian energy monopoly in the Republic of Moldova. As the result, the Moldova's integration into the EU is another challenge for Russia's influence into the country that means that it will lose its energy leverage in the region.

Moldova – NATO cooperation is the second pillar of GORM SSP. In 2006, the government of the Republic of Moldova and the North Atlantic Council adopted the IPAP Moldova - NATO, which marked a new stage of cooperation between the two parties. This document sets a number of important goals, such as the deepening of Moldova's cooperation with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures and institutions, promoting democratic reforms in various fields, reform and modernization of the defense and security areas, strengthening democratic control over armed forces.<sup>75</sup> After several years of stagnation, in August 2010 the government of the Republic of Moldova and NATO approved the final consolidated version of IPAP.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Republic of Moldova Official Website, "European Integration," accessed February 12, 2017, <http://www.moldova.md/en/europa/>

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, "Moldova – NATO Relations Official Website," accessed February 12, 2017, <http://www.mfa.gov.md/nato-en/relation-rm-nato/>.

<sup>76</sup> Republic of Moldova - NATO, Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) Republic of Moldova – NATO 2014-2016 (Chisinau: 2014), 2-5.

As a neutral state, Moldova does not pursue the implementation of the IPAP with the objective of gaining NATO membership. The IPAP promotes the reform of all the Republic of Moldova's security and defense structures. In addition, it helps Moldova to develop the capacity to ensure the security of its nation, which will contribute to regional and international security and stability.<sup>77</sup> This will increase Moldova's National Army interoperability with NATO and will be an excellent instrument for the country to boost adjacent civil-to-military cooperation platforms. These platforms will address cyber-security threats, prevention of human-caused or natural disasters, and other forms of crises generated by hybrid warfare. The Republic of Moldova's Defense Minister Anatol Șalaru stated in May 2016 that the "Republic of Moldova shall apply to get an Observation statute for the NATO Summit in Warsaw," and that "Moldova cannot be a stable country without a modern national army."<sup>78</sup> Cooperation with NATO is an opportunity for Moldova's National Army to develop and modernize its capabilities, which is important based on the regional security environment. However, the Russian Federation sees the Republic of Moldova's cooperation with NATO as a threat to regional security especially, for the Transnistrian region.

The Twitter Revolution provided opportunities for civil society to get involved in Moldova's decision-making processes by acting as a "check and balance." Civil society is the "aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 2-7.

<sup>78</sup> Igor Munteanu. "Moldova's Security cannot be achieved without NATO," *Foreign and Security Policy Paper* 4 no 26, (2016): 12-14.

interests and will of citizens.”<sup>79</sup> The Russian Federation viewed the openness of the GORM as a challenge to its influence in the former Soviet country. At the same time, this was an opportunity for the Russian Federation to use propaganda to convince Moldova’s skeptics that the current SSP is useless.

The Russian Federation viewed the openness of the GORM as a challenge because the civil society’s democratic involvement in Moldova’s political life increased the country’s credibility both internally and externally.<sup>80</sup> With the support of the EU and USA, the Republic of Moldova engaged itself in a process of strengthening its civil society. As the result, the civil society started to face a considerable amount of attention from different NGOs due to the established cooperation frameworks between the EU and Republic of Moldova. An example is the EaP Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) that was established at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague 2009 where the Republic of Moldova’s civil society took an active role being involved in different programs and seminars. The aim of this forum was to promote contact among civil society organizations of the EaP countries, and facilitate dialogue with public authorities.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the Republic of Moldova’s civil society organizations such as “Asociația Promo-LEX,” “Casa Mărioarei” started to address social problems such as human trafficking, domestic violence, protecting children’s rights as well as human rights and principles, and fighting against corruption and discrimination. Western assistance granted to Moldovan NGOs

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<sup>79</sup> Civic.md, “Societate Civila,” accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.civic.md/glosar/1722-societate-civila.html>.

<sup>80</sup> Victoria Bucataru, “Moldova Still at a Crossroads,” 144.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 145.

presume strict accountability rules, contribute to institutional development and sustainability of different NGOs as part of civil society.<sup>82</sup>

Joseph Nye refers to soft-power type resources as institutions, ideas, values, culture, and the perceived legitimacy of policies, a positive “domestic model.”<sup>83</sup> Soft power relies on positive attraction channeled indirectly because it is mediated through mass audiences rather than elites. The EU model (political and legal, economic, labor and free movement of people benefits and fundamental rights) enables the Republic of Moldova to move towards the EU, and increase political, economic, and cultural links to do so. It is underpinned by a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms - and to the market economy, sustainable development and good governance. Therefore, the transfer of practices, values, and European principles through civil society make EU soft power successful in promoting democratic culture.<sup>84</sup>

The Republic of Moldova represents a typical example where two development patterns meet and balance against each other (the EU development model and the Russian Federation with the Eurasian Economic Union). The EU and NATO’s foreign policy of promoting democracy in post-Soviet states and creating a “circle of friends” around

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 183.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 186.

Europe is perceived by the Russian Federation as a direct threat to its geopolitical interests.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, the Russian Federation views the openness of the GORM to entire civil society as an opportunity. It uses propaganda, to discredit Western institutions and states that have become a priority in its arsenal to pressure the Republic of Moldova's decisions makers. The Russian propaganda aims to dispel any belief that the EU, and by extension NATO, is serious about Moldova. According to Russian media the Western institutions uses Moldova to achieve their interests in the region such as EU wants Transnistrian economic infrastructure and NATO wants a military footprints in the region. The Russian propaganda sends these messages hoping to influence the population to not support the current SSP (pro-EU political parties) and support pro - EEU (pro-Russian political parties) as a better alternative which the next subchapter describes.<sup>86</sup>

#### Goals of the Russian Federation's Propaganda in the Republic of Moldova

The general aim of the Russian propaganda effort is to undermine the security arrangement in Europe that the Russian Federation sees as unfair and unsustainable. Moreover, Russian government believes in a "gray zone" along its borders where it enjoys special political and economic status and can constrain other nations' sovereignty. Russia's Government views the post-1989 settlement as temporary and an area in which it can apply all of its instruments of national power to influence and control the post-

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<sup>85</sup> Levan Avalishvili, "Kremlin's Information War against Georgia," *Policy Paper*, August 22, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://idfi.ge/public/upload/Meri/Giorgi%20Lomtadze/Policy%20Paper.PDF>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 143.



Soviet countries. For instance, in 2014, it annexed Crimea to deny Ukraine joining EU. The Russian Federation sees democracies and open societies as a threat to its national security. It views Western talk of human rights and the rule of law as either critical promulgation or gullible and hallucinating. In this situation the Russian Federation aims to “disorganize and demoralize” the enemy (western democracy and the post-Soviet states which follow the democratic path) and achieve victory (pro-Russian government) without the need of full-scale military intervention.<sup>87</sup>

According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, the purpose of the Russian Federation’s propaganda in the Republic of Moldova is to influence the opinion of its compatriots and lobbyists in order to pressure the Moldovan public opinion and the GORM to change its SSP.<sup>88</sup> The key objectives of the propaganda in the Republic of Moldova are:

1. Instigate anti-Western sentiments among the Republic of Moldova’s population.<sup>89</sup> By discrediting Western institutions (such as the EU and NATO) and states, Russian propaganda disparages the values associated with them: democracy, rule of law, human rights, etc. The origins of the Russian anti-Western propaganda are not entirely clear and its messages are incoherently articulated. For instance, Russian propaganda tries to sway Moldovan public opinion into believing that democracy is a sham and

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<sup>87</sup> Edward Lucas and Ben Nimmo, “Information Warfare: What is it and how to win it?” *Cepa Infowar no1*, November 2015, accessed November 20, 2017, [http://cepa.org/files/?id\\_plik=1896](http://cepa.org/files/?id_plik=1896).

<sup>88</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 316-320.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

politicians are crooked and ridiculous. This is not a coherent message, and these narratives often clash. As the Finnish “Fog of Falsehood” study pointed out, contemporary Russian ideology is like a kaleidoscope with multiple versions of reality.<sup>90</sup> In addition, Russian propaganda emphasizes Russian Orthodox values in opposition to Western values of liberalism and individual human rights. Similarly, the proponents of Eurasianism argue that liberalism is dangerous and foreign to Russia and to the Russian World because of its capacity to liberate the individual from all forms of collective identity. Russian officials and Orthodox Church leaders reject the idea that individual human rights prevail over the interests of society. This view has become the paradigm for Russia to position itself as a defender of its traditional values at home and abroad.<sup>91</sup> As the result, Russia wants to convince the people of Moldova that Western values are dangerous and immoral, and are against local traditional values.

2. Disrupt the Republic of Moldova’s EU integration aspiration.<sup>92</sup> Russian Federation propaganda tries to convey that EU integration of the Republic of Moldova means European occupation and the association agreement are used to lure states into NATO.<sup>93</sup> Russia’s propaganda messages try to demonize the Republic of Moldova - EU

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<sup>90</sup> Katri Pynnöniemi and András Rácz, “Russian Strategy of Deception and the Conflict in Ukraine,” *Fog of Falsehood* 45, May 10, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017, [http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/588/fog\\_of\\_falsehood/](http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/588/fog_of_falsehood/).

<sup>91</sup> Orysia Lutsevych, “Agents of the Russian World,” *Russia and Eurasia Programme*, April 14, 2016, accessed October 20, 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/agents-russian-world-proxy-groups-contested-neighbourhood>.

<sup>92</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 318-320.

<sup>93</sup> Secieru Stanislav, “Russian Influence Abroad: Non-state Actors and Propaganda,” *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, October 24, 2014, accessed

Association Agreement in an attempt to prevent its development and implementation. If Russia were successful, that would create conditions to change the SSP of Moldova from EU-oriented to Eurasian Economic Union. In addition, Russian Federation propaganda tries to manipulate its compatriots' opinion that the Third Energy Package is detrimental to the Republic of Moldova's economy. The Third Energy Package is the EU gas and electricity market. It helps to keep the gas and electricity prices as low as possible and increase standards of service and security of supply. Russia is attempting to block the Chisinau's plans to implement the Third Energy Package, and encourage Moldova to join the Common Economic Space which is a single market covering the EEU led by the Russian Federation. By disrupting the Republic of Moldova's EU integration Russia would demonstrate to the Western countries and the post-Soviet states that any attempt to implement integration projects in the post-Soviet area without its consent are doomed to fail.<sup>94</sup>

3. Popularize Russia's global policy among the population of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>95</sup> Russian propaganda tries to increase the popularity of the Eurasianism among Moldovan population especially among its compatriots. After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), millions of ethnic Russians choose to live outside of the borders of the Russian Federation. Russian Federation officials claim to defend the rights and interests of thirty million ethnic Russians and 300 million Russian-speakers

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February 20, 2017, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/russian-influence-abroad-non-state-actors-and-propaganda>.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>95</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 316-320.

abroad. To popularize Eurasianism the Russian Federation created different NGOs to promote the Russian language, defend the human rights of compatriots, promote Christianity and the conservative values as the core of Eurasian civilization, and defend the Russian interpretation of history – particularly Second World War history.<sup>96</sup> This is a long-range objective, which helps Russia increase its supporters and influence within the Republic of Moldova in different ways from elections and anti-government protests to local referendums with different aims.

4. Ingrain confusion, fear, and hatred among the Moldova's population by proliferating suspicious ideas, misleading statements, and false information.<sup>97</sup> Russian propaganda's aim is not to convince or persuade, but rather to undermine. Instead of agitating audiences into action, it seeks to keep them hooked and distracted, passive and suspicious. The Russian Federation military references, describe this concept as "information-psychological war." It is a method used to disorganize and demoralize an opponent in the realms of perception and the minds of men, which is conducted during both peace and wartime.<sup>98</sup>

#### Structure of the Propaganda Organization

According to Iulian Chifu, Oazu Nantoi, and Oleksandr Sushko the Russian Federation uses media outlets, NGOs, the Orthodox Church and political parties to

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<sup>96</sup> Secrieru, "Russian Influence Abroad," 4.

<sup>97</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 316-320.

<sup>98</sup> Lucas and Pomeranzev, "Winning the Information War," 10.

disseminate its propaganda narratives in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>99</sup> Usually their messages are linked with the Russian general objective in the Republic of Moldova.

### Media

Mass media is the most effective asset to sending Russian propaganda messages to its audience in the Republic of Moldova. It includes traditional media (TV, radio, press) and digital media (Internet, information portals, and social networks).<sup>100</sup> The results of an October 2016 public opinion poll showed that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are very dependent on television, as the main source of information, having surpassed other information sources such as print media, radio, and the internet. Table 1 demonstrates that the people in the Republic of Moldova spend at least 103 minutes daily watching TV. Table 2 shows that television represents the main source of information for about 78 percent of the population in 2016.

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<sup>99</sup> Iulian Chifu, Oazu Nantoi and Oleksandr Sushko, *Perceptia Rusiei in Romania, Republica Moldova si Ucraina* (Bucuresti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2010), 251- 278.

<sup>100</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 319.

Table 1. Average daily minutes of consumption per individual in Moldova

	Newspapers	Magazines	Television	Radio	Cinema	Outdoor	Internet
2015	3.0	1.8	110.3	35.2	1.3	92.3	72.3
2016	2.8	1.8	102.8	34.5	1.2	90.2	76.4
2017	2.7	1.7	98.5	34.2	1.1	89.1	76.8

*Source:* Anne Austin, Jonathan Barnard, and Nicola Hutcheon. “Media Consumption Forecasts 2016,” *Zenith Optimedia*, June 2016, accessed March 20, 2017 <http://communicateonline.me/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Media-Consumption-Forecasts-2016.pdf>

Table 2. The main source of information of the people of the Republic of Moldova

	APR 2014	NOV 2014	MAR 2015	NOV 2015	APR 2016	OCT 2016
TV	82 percent	83 percent	89 percent	84 percent	84 percent	78 percent
Press	14 percent	15 percent	10 percent	12 percent	9 percent	11 percent
Radio	30 percent	24 percent	28 percent	25 percent	27 percent	24 percent
Internet	35 percent	36 percent	38 percent	41 percent	42 percent	40 percent
Social network	14 percent	12 percent	13 percent	13 percent	16 percent	16 percent

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>.

Russian TV channels are the most popular and dominate Moldova’s media market. According to the RM’s Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC), which is an autonomous public authority, 70 percent of the TV channels that are operating in the Republic of Moldova are Russian Federation owned. They promote Russian Federation policies and send its messages. The Russian TV channels, which dominate the Republic

of Moldova's media market, are Prime TV (Первый канал), RTR Moldova (Россия PTP) and TNT Bravo (TNT).<sup>101</sup> They operate in the Republic of Moldova under broadcasting licenses issued by the BCC and include programs produced in the Russian Federation in their broadcast. These channels are mainly owned by private public companies and are controlled by the government. In April 2014, the BCC monitored the content of the five TV channels (local broadcaster Prime TV that rebroadcasts Russian First Channel, local broadcaster TV 7 that rebroadcasts Russian NTV, and broadcasters RTR Moldova, Ren Moldova and Russia 24) that air media content produced in Russia.

According to BCC findings, most news reports and political shows were biased, manipulative, and promoted only the Government of the Russian Federation point of view. Based on the findings, the BCC decided to suspend the retransmission of Russia 24 and applied sanction mechanism (warning, fine) to Prime TV, TV 7, Ren TV Moldova and RTR Moldova.<sup>102</sup> The theme of the RF's message was that the prospects for the Republic of Moldova's integration with the EU are an illusion, and real benefits can be drawn only from Eurasian integration. As a result, the Russian TV channels are carrying manipulative messages that are tied directly to Russian propaganda objectives in

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<sup>101</sup> Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent, "Indicele situației mass-media (ISMM) din Republica Moldova în 2016," *Raport annual*, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://media-azi.md/ro/publicatii/indicele-situa%C8%9Biei-mass-media-ismm-din-republica-moldova-%C3%AEn-2016>.

<sup>102</sup> EaP Civil Society Forum, European Endowment for Democracy and Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji, "Messages of Russian TV," *Monitoring Report 2015*, accessed February 20, 2017, [http://archive.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Monitoring%20report\\_Russian%20TV.pdf](http://archive.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Monitoring%20report_Russian%20TV.pdf).

Moldova. Often, these messages are anti-European and anti-national and aim to misinform and manipulate local public opinion.

Internet is the second most important source of information in the Republic of Moldova. The average Moldovan population spends 77 minutes a day on the internet and 40 percent of them consider the internet the main source of information. Although the internet, (unlike TV in Moldova) offers more choice and a greater diversity of information sources, the decisive factor remains the preferences and habits of users. Table 3 provides information about the most popular websites in the Republic of Moldova.

Table 3. Most popular websites in Moldova

Website	Reach	Type of website
md.mail.ru	55.68 percent	Personal email
odnoklassniki.md	53.87 percent	Social media
megogo.net	25.50 percent	Online movie theater
point.md	17.05 percent	News agency
999.md	27.78 percent	E---commerce

Source: Sijbren de Jong et. al., “Beyond the Cold War of Words,” *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*, accessed February 20, 2017, [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_Beyond\\_the\\_Cold\\_War\\_of\\_Words.pdf](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_Beyond_the_Cold_War_of_Words.pdf)

According to data from the Audit Bureau of Circulations and Internet (ABCI) which is a Moldavian NGO committed to providing independently verified data and information critical to evaluating and purchasing media, the internet users in the Republic



of Moldova favor portals of Russian origin widely using search engines and electronic mailboxes such as Mail.ru, Yandex.ru and Rambler.ru. In addition, the internet users widely use local social networks such as Odnoklassniki and VKontakte. Often different groups use these social networks to promote anti-NATO, anti-USA and anti-EU messages. It is difficult to prove that these groups are linked to the Government of the Russian Federation but their messages support the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Odnoklassniki has been ranked as the 10th social network in the world with 65.3 million users that correspond to 4.2 percent of the global audience. As the result, Russian social media such as Odnoklassniki or Vkontakte serve as the tools to send Russian's propaganda messages to the Russian compatriots worldwide, and is not limited to Moldova's target audience.<sup>103</sup>

With the growing popularity of social media platforms, the cyber-attack concept gains a lot of attraction and interest throughout the world. The minimal cost combined with the manipulation of perceptions through rumors and messages allow propaganda to propagate hatred and reinforce the prejudices of a target population. Consequently, digital media in Moldova is closely connected and integrated into RuNet, which is a net/network that refers to the Russian-language community on the internet and websites. Besides providing specialized services, RuNet also serves as a platform for information operations directed against Moldavian population.<sup>104</sup> According to a Freedom House report, the internet is heavily censored in Russia. It is forbidden to criticize the

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<sup>103</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 320.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 320.

authorities, social conflicts, corruption, political opposition, protests and mass mobilization internally. At the same time, Russia does not deny that its different networks manipulate, misinform and create confusion abroad by sending different messages.<sup>105</sup>

A prominent aspect of the Russian Federation's anti-Western propaganda is the ubiquitous activities of trolls (online personae run by humans) and bots (run by automated processes), interacting directly with reader in a range of media. The intent of online trolling is to provoke argument and confusion.<sup>106</sup> According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, troll operations are directed from Moscow. Russia seems to have made an important resource by having opinion makers target its audiences.<sup>107</sup>

Most importantly, Russia engages different people who blindly believe in the Russian propaganda lies and take a position that leads to achieving the propaganda objectives. In conclusion, the public's perception in the Republic of Moldova is formed largely on the flow of news coming from Russian sources or its affiliates. Russian Federation uses its TV channels, internet websites and troll operations to distort information, impose their vision, and as a result spread confusion, disorientation and lack of confidence among the population of the Republic of Moldova.

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<sup>105</sup> Sanja Kelly, Madeline Earp and Laura Reed, "Privatizing Censorship, Eroding Privacy," *Freedom House*, accessed February 23, 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net-2015/freedom-net-2015-privatizing-censorship-eroding-privacy>.

<sup>106</sup> Keir Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2016), 54.

<sup>107</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 321.

## Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are another tool that the Russian Federation uses to disseminate its messages in the post-Soviet countries. *Joint Publication 1-02* defines NGOs as “a private, self-governing, not-for-profit organization dedicated to alleviating human suffering; and/or promoting education, health care, economic development, environmental protection, human rights, and conflict resolution; and/or encouraging the establishment of democratic institutions and civil society.”<sup>108</sup> In the Russian Federation operate more than 220,000 NGOs. Russian law requires that the NGOs do not generate profit as their main objective and do not distribute any profit among their participants. In addition, the 2006 Russian NGO Law defines foundations as “property-based, non-membership organizations created by individuals or legal persons (or both) to pursue social, charitable, cultural, educational, or other public benefit goals.”<sup>109</sup> As the result, Russian Law does not prohibit the Government from financing any NGOs. The above definitions reveal that Western countries and Russian Federation have different approaches toward the NGOs.

According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, the most active NGOs, which follow Russia’s agenda in the Republic of Moldova, are “Russkii Mir”, “Rossotrudnichestvo”, “Izborsk Club”, “Russian Youth Association”, “Patria-Uniunea Euroasiatică”, “ZA

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<sup>108</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1- 02 Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. (Department of Defense Director for Joint Force Development (J-7), 2010), 34.

<sup>109</sup> NGO Law Monitor - Russia, “International Center for Not-for-Profit Law,” accessed March 19, 2017, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un-dpadm/unpan044570.pdf>

Rodinu (Pentru Patrie)”, “Patrioții Moldovei”, and “Mișcarea de Eliberare Națională Moldova”. The authors argue that these NGOs portray anti-Western messages and their analytical papers and articles are based on Russian sources.<sup>110</sup>

The most important Russian NGO in the Republic of Moldova is Rossotrudnichestvo. Its official objective is to develop assistance, public diplomacy, educational, and scientific cooperation with the Russian ethnics in Moldova. In addition, it assists Russian compatriots by promoting Russian language and culture, and protecting historic (for Russia) monuments and burial sites in Moldova. Officially, this NGO reports directly to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its director is equivalent in rank to a deputy minister. Rossotrudnichestvo receives a separate budget allocation to support Russian compatriots. For instance, in 2014, it received 111.4 million rubles (\$2 mil). Of this, the sum of 57.4 million rubles was directed to programs outside Russia.<sup>111</sup> Since it is subordinated and financed by the Russian Government this NGO carry anti-Western messages by convincing the audience that Western values are foreign to Moldovans, argues Oazu Nantoi.<sup>112</sup>

Another important Russian NGO that operates in the Republic of Moldova is Russkiy Mir. It was created in 2007 under the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, which supports it financially. The Russkiy Mir task is to encourage the study of the Russian language and culture in the Republic of Moldova. Its target audience is the

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<sup>110</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 372-382.

<sup>111</sup> Mike Winnerstig, “Tools of Destabilization,” *FOI* (2014): 25-26.

<sup>112</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 372-382.

interested broader public in Russia and it has three offices in the Republic of Moldova, which are in Balti, Comrat, and Tiraspol.<sup>113</sup>

The Izborsk Club, also known as the Institute for Dynamic Conservatism was founded in 2012 in the city of Izborsk, Russia. In 2015, the organization received 10 million rubles from the Government as the grant for its foreign project. In the project description, it is stated that the organization will explain, “What is the Russian World?” In the Republic of Moldova, the Izborsk Club started its activity in 2016. It is known that the members of the Izborsk Club support the Russian EEU project, and is opposed to EU integration of the post-Soviet countries. Also, the organization disseminates Russian Federation nationalist-imperial ideas, which used to be limited to the margins of political discourse. Its nationalist slogans are based on the concept of the “Russian World” which the paper describes later. All of the above NGOs are characterized by a distinct anti-Western and pro-Russian rhetoric.<sup>114</sup>

### Church

According to Witold Rodkiewicz who is a professor at the Center for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, the Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in influencing the views of a significant part of Moldovan population.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 378-382.

<sup>114</sup> Jolanta Darczewska, “The Information War on Ukraine,” *The Cicero Foundation*, December 2014, accessed January 20, 2017, [http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Jolanta\\_Darczewska\\_Info\\_War\\_Ukraine.pdf](http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Jolanta_Darczewska_Info_War_Ukraine.pdf).

<sup>115</sup> Witold Rodkiewicz, “Russia’s strategy towards Moldova: continuation or change?” *Centre for Eastern Studies 74*, April 19, 2012, accessed January 15, 2017,

Because the majority of the Republic of Moldova's population is Christian Orthodox (93.3 percent), the Orthodox Church is regarded as one of the most efficient instruments for propagating Russian interests in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, the church is the most trusted institution for the people. Table 4 shows the most reliable institutions in the Republic of Moldova at the end of 2016 and the church is on the top of the list.

Table 4. The most reliable institutions in the Republic of Moldova

	APR 2014	NOV 2014	MAR 2015	NOV 2015	APR 2016	OCT 2016
Church	85 percent	80 percent	81 percent	74 percent	79 percent	73 percent
Military	42 percent	46 percent	40 percent	42 percent	33 percent	30 percent
Police	31 percent	39 percent	29 percent	31 percent	26 percent	25 percent

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice, octombrie 2016,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>

The Metropolitan Church of the Republic of Moldova administers 70 percent of Orthodox parishes in the country and is canonically subordinated to the Russian Federation Archdiocese. Every church service in the country starts with an eternal memory to His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and Entire Russia. Additionally, certain prayers are officiated in the Russian language in practically all the churches under the jurisdiction of the Moldova Metropolitan Church, regardless of the ethnic specificity of

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<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2012-04-19/russias-strategy-towards-moldova-continuation-or-change>.

the locality.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the Moldovan Orthodox Church has a self-government special status in the Republic of Moldova. In reality, this “self-governance” means a docile subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church’s interests, which in turn, is an annex of the Russian political regime.<sup>117</sup>

Nye’s concept of soft power has sources that may include particular values that are perceived as belonging to a country’s identity.<sup>118</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church is of particular importance here. Fyodor Lukyanov, a Russian analyst, argues that the Orthodox Church is a Russian soft power tool and promotes the concept of the so-called “Russian World”, a community of all Orthodox Christians in the post-Soviet area. The concept of the “Russian World” is being promoted as an alternative to Western values. The Russian Patriarch, Kirill, has a clear vision of a consolidated Russian world that is more powerful than political alliances. This links with the current state policy of patriotism and the efforts by the political leadership of Russia to define a Russian national identity.<sup>119</sup>

Frederick Starr and Svante Cornell argued in the *Putin’s Grand Strategy* that Orthodox churches are used by the Russian Federation to send anti-Western messages in the post-Soviet area. This is particularly pronounced in Orthodox Christian countries such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, where the Orthodox Churches maintains close ties

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<sup>116</sup> Chifu, Nantoi and Sushko, 263.

<sup>117</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 312.

<sup>118</sup> Nye, Jr., *Soft Power*, 183.

<sup>119</sup> Winnerstig, “Tools of Destabilization,” 29.

with Russia and the people are very religious. It is no coincidence, therefore, that leading Church representatives in the Republic of Moldova has spoken out against the corrupting influence of the EU at precisely the same time when Putin was making anti-European propaganda a staple of his state ideology.<sup>120</sup>

According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, the Republic of Moldova's Church representatives are actively involved in media campaigns aimed at compromising the EU in the eyes of Moldova's citizens. In particular, this refers to the hysteria caused by gender and sexual rights – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) new country legislation. Since 2009, as the Republic of Moldova - EU relations has been increasing it can be noticed an activation of the "Euro-Asian vector" forces with open involvement of the Republic of Moldova's Orthodox Church representatives. As the result, anti-Western messages and actions were (and still are) orchestrated and controlled from Russia and the Moldovan Orthodox Church plays a significant role in promoting Russian's interests.<sup>121</sup>

### Political Parties

Distributors of anti-EU propaganda are present in the political domain as well. A number of political parties (usually leftist political parties) and different political figures in Moldova directly or indirectly spread Kremlin propaganda. They openly follow pro-Russian agendas, visit Moscow, and meet with Russian politicians. They work towards

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<sup>120</sup> S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell, *Putin's Grand Strategy: The Eurasian Union and Its Discontents* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2014), 67.

<sup>121</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 313.



raising skepticism about the Republic of Moldova's EU integration by depicting it as purposeless. Instead, they promote the Republic of Moldova as pro-Russian and see the country as part of EEU. Pro-Russian political parties have made anti-Western statements as well. These anti-EU integration messages and statements directly or indirectly serve the goals of Russian Federation's propaganda.<sup>122</sup> In order to exert political influence in Moldova, the Russian government has links with some political parties. This is helped by the fact that in the Moldovan political system, most parties are "parties of personalities" rather than "program parties." Parties of personalities means that political parties are in some sense central to the personality, usually the political party leaders, which allows the Kremlin to pursue its agenda more freely. The Russian Federation's main objective is to have a pro-Russian parliamentary majority in the Republic of Moldova to impede its move towards the EU integration and reorient towards EEU as the final step.<sup>123</sup> All Russian propaganda tools such as media outlets, NGOs, Orthodox Church and political parties have their separate objectives are orchestrated and controlled from the Russian Federation. It is difficult to delineate them separately. The fact is they are supported by the Russian Federation and their general message is directed against current the Moldova's SSP.

#### Target Audience

Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell argue that propagandists choose its target audience for its potential viability. Then, the propaganda messages focus on the audience

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>123</sup> Secrieru, "Russian Influence Abroad," 5-6.

if it reacts positively.<sup>124</sup> Russian Federation propaganda spreads (mis)information and tries to engage all possible target audiences in the Republic of Moldova. According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi, the Russian propaganda targets three main groups: the youth, the Soviet nostalgic and the Russian compatriots/ sympathizers.<sup>125</sup>

The youth in the Republic of Moldova is the first propaganda target audience. Russian propaganda focuses on youth living in Russian language speaking regions such as Gagauzia, Transnistria, Taraclia, and in the northern regions of the country. It aims to consolidate the pro-Russian youth and provide them with skills and access to Russian thinkers and standards of journalism and diplomacy. To send its messages Russia uses NGOs and media. First, Russia uses the League of Russian Youth, Russkii Mir, Russotrudnicestvo and others NGOs to engage its targets in different programs and activities such as cultural, information, scientific, and educational cooperation. For example, it uses different forums and their websites to engage the youth in different historical, cultural and educational discussions. It is difficult to state or assume how many people are engaged by these NGOs programs, activities and forums because on their websites or documents there are no official numbers. The fact is that by engaging the Republic of Moldova's youth in different programs and activities these NGOs disseminate the Russian interpretation of world affairs to the target audience.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, 295.

<sup>125</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 318-321.

<sup>126</sup> Secrieru, "Russian Influence Abroad," 6-7.

An effective tool used to send the propaganda messages to this youth audience is the Russian media in the Moldova where the TV channels play a major role. In these regions mentioned above, EEU advertisements are aired free, whereas pro-EU advertisements have to be paid for. By engaging the Republic of Moldova's young generation in different activities and programs, the Russian Federation investments for the future. Eventually, the Russian Federation can use this audience for active participation during the elections supporting pro-Russian parties. Also, Russia can use them during anti-EU, NATO protests and meetings and finally as a tool for spreading Russian propaganda messages to others (parents, friends and simple classmates).<sup>127</sup>

Russia Federation propaganda promotes a message of unifying the "Russian World". Historical trauma and nostalgic memories of Soviet greatness are skillfully leveraged to increase a sense of grievance in the Republic of Moldova. One of the most effective Russian Federation's propaganda narrative exploits the heroic legacy of World War II. For example, it employs false syllogisms, such as "Stalin fought the Nazis, therefore everyone who fought Stalin was a Nazi," and then links these to the present: "Everyone who opposes Russia now is a fascist."<sup>128</sup> Edward Lucas and Peter Pomeranzev argue that the Russian Federation creates different working groups of psychologists, historians, sociologists and media specialists to create and develop different propaganda ideas. These "ideas factory groups" develop ways of approaching historical and

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>128</sup> Lucas and Pomeranzev, "Winning the Information War," 13-17.

psychological trauma.<sup>129</sup> Then, around these narratives, the Russian Federation produces movies, documentaries, historical films and drama series that reinforce nostalgia for wartime victories and exalt the role of Russian and Soviet security services. Finally, the Russian Federation uses its tools such as TV, radio, internet, press and NGOs to send these hidden ideas and narratives to the target. As a result, it attracts viewers by making Russian versions of popular Western talent shows and by mimicking the format of reality TV. The authors argue that the Russian Federation uses also the Western production companies (the authors do not give examples) to produce different movies, patriotic documentaries and different entertainments around propagandistic ideas and narratives. These companies send the Russian messages and narratives to different viewers, who then stay tuned for the current affairs.<sup>130</sup> As a result, the Russian Federation keeps alive the trauma of the collapse of the USSR and nostalgic feelings in the Republic of Moldova. Then, Russia can use these nostalgic people to vote for pro-Russian political parties, during different anti-EU and NATO protests and as a tool of spreading propaganda messages.

The sootechestvenniki, or “compatriots” are the third target audience group that the Russian Federation’s propaganda tries to influence.<sup>131</sup> Figure 2 shows that around 5.9 percent of the population of the Republic of Moldova are Russian ethnic residents, which

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>131</sup> Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, “Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union,” *Center for Strategic Studies*, November 2015, accessed February 11, 2017, [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf).

is a relative low number when compared with other post-Soviet countries. According to the Russian Federation when defining “compatriots” it is necessary to add other ethnics groups living in Moldova such as Ukrainian 8.4 percent, Gagauz 4.4 percent, and Bulgarian 1.9 percent, who count 20.9 percent. Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell argue that the propaganda communication is characterized by the common use of language.<sup>132</sup> From the total population of the Republic of Moldova 16 percent speak Russian language, Ukrainian 3.8 percent and Gagauz 3.1percent (a Turkish language), Bulgarian 1.1 percent.<sup>133</sup> In general, the Ukrainians, Gagauz, and Bulgarian ethnics speak the Russian language as a means for general communication. For instance, the Gagauz ethnics use the Russian language to communicate with other ethnics, even with the Moldavian ethnics. As a result, 24 percent of the Republic of Moldova population speaks the Russian language making them an easy target for the Russian propaganda.

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<sup>132</sup> Jowett and O’Donnell, 190.

<sup>133</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Europe: Moldova,” accessed January 15, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.html>

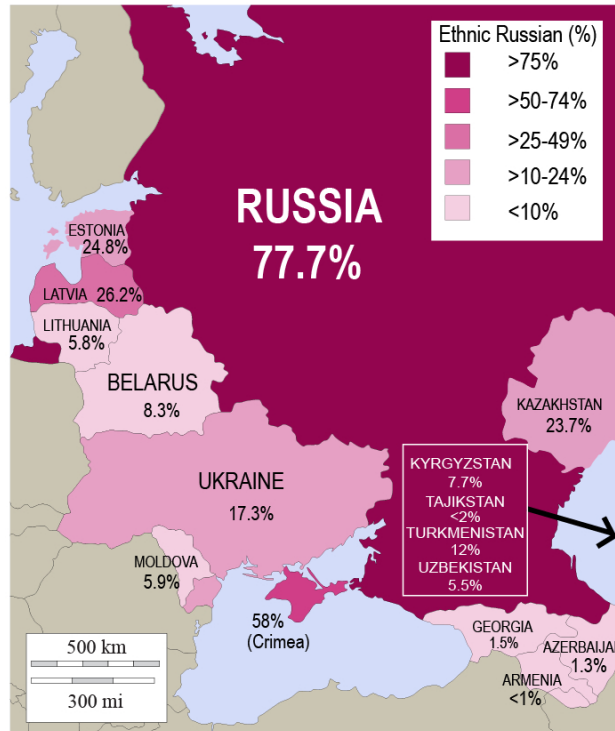


Figure 2. Percentage of Ethnic Russians Residing Outside of Russia in Former Soviet

Source: Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, “Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union,” *Center for Strategic Studies*, November 2015, accessed February 11, 2017, [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf).

In seeking to influence the former Soviet region, Russian compatriots can be useful to Moscow in many ways. Their very existence strengthens Russia’s argument that there is a “Russian World” (Russkiy Mir) larger than Russia itself that lends legitimacy to both Russia’s great power status and its regional aspirations. To the extent that they identify with Russia not only culturally but also politically, Russian compatriots can amplify Russia’s political influence in the former USSR countries and provide political,

economic, and military intelligence.<sup>134</sup> Top Russian officials have consistently described protecting Russian compatriots as a foreign policy objective for the past two decades, and virtually Russia's entire post-independence history. For instance, Boris Yeltsin, the former president of the Russian Federation issued what appeared to be the first government-wide instructions on the protection of the Russian compatriots in an August 1994 decree called "On the Fundamental Directions of State Policy of the Russian Federation in relation to Compatriots Living Abroad." As the result, an inter-agency coordinating commission was established to review and approve a list of "priority measures" to support Russian compatriots.<sup>135</sup>

Officially, the Russian Federation policy toward Russian compatriots is oriented to help them improve living conditions wherever they reside or, alternatively, resettle in Russia. From this perspective, compatriots are subjects of Russian policy. Yet, Russia's practical policy toward its compatriots appears to approach them as tools to implement broader policies that may affect compatriots but not benefit them. In fact, the substantial numbers of Russian compatriots who live in the Republic of Moldova can serve as instruments of Russia's foreign policy in several ways.<sup>136</sup>

First, the Russian compatriot communities that live in the Republic of Moldova accept the idea of a cultural "Russian world" larger than Russia itself, proved by different regional referendums that took place in Moldova in the last eleven years and are

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 7-12.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 21.

described in the first chapter. This maintains pride in the country's imperial and Soviet past while simultaneously demonstrating that Russia is a great power with social and cultural influence beyond its borders. Russia's NGOs play a leading role in this area, promoting Russian language education and Russian culture. For example, Russian NGOs increased budget suggests that the compatriots in the Republic of Moldova and post-Soviet countries are the main Russian target.<sup>137</sup>

Second, the Russian Federation is successful in aligning compatriots' cultural and political identification with Russia rather than with Moldova. The Russian government can cultivate existing mistrust to alienate compatriot populations from Moldova's government. Russian officials can use this alienation immediately or allow it to remain latent, as a resource for the future. In practice, alienation can take place at multiple levels, including particular individuals, NGOs representing compatriots, and even regional governments within Moldova (Gagauzia and Transnistria).<sup>138</sup>

Finally, Russian compatriots in Moldova can serve as an invaluable intelligence resource, providing information about military capabilities, trade, financial and economic policy, and internal politics of the country. Protecting the human rights of Russian compatriots is an attractive diplomatic/public affairs opportunity for Moscow thus allowing to position itself favorably in the international media to defend ethnic Russians or Russian speakers living abroad. The Russian Federation uses propaganda tools to send its anti-Western messages to the Republic of Moldova target audience. To achieve its

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 23.



objectives the Russian Federation propaganda uses different media and special technics, which are various, sophisticated, and effective.

### Media and Special Techniques

#### The Russian Federation's Propaganda Narratives

According to Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi in the *Război Informațional Tipizarea modelului agresiunii* the Russian Federation's propaganda narratives are divided into three distinct levels:

Globally. The narratives for the international community are:

1. The Russian Federation is a global player and its interests must be taken into account;
2. The West (USA, EU and NATO) lead an aggressive and expansionist policy based on hypocrisy and double standards;
3. The Russian Federation wants to cooperate but it is forced to compete with the West; and,
4. The Russian Federation is a unique state with a distinct identity, expressed through the so-called Russian World (Russkii Mir). Moreover, the Russian World narrative serves as raw material for national chauvinism and hostile foreign policy justification.<sup>139</sup>

Regionally. At the regional level, the narratives are projected onto certain regions, especially at post-Soviet countries. These narratives exploit Russia's regional leadership

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<sup>139</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 316.

and focus on socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural “Soviet people”. The central narratives are:

1. The post-Soviet countries are nations who have a common history and destiny;
2. The post-Soviet countries are the Russian Federation’s sphere of influence and they are treated as secondary partners;
3. The Russian Federation is a guarantor of regional security and stability, and Euro-Atlantic organizations are destabilizing forces in the region;
4. Euro-Atlantic integration models are discredited;
5. Credible projects are EEU, and Collective Security Treaty Organization.<sup>140</sup>

Locally. The Russian Federation uses several narratives at the local level (for the target audience in Moldova). These narratives are:

1. The Republic of Moldova is a poor and powerless country being manipulated by the West:
2. The EU integration of the Republic of Moldova is a wrong idea, which will lead the country to failure. An example of this narrative can be found in the Centre for Research and International Journalism RIA *Novosti* report. According to the report, the Republic of Moldova is a poor country, because of the country’s SSP (EU integration and cooperation with NATO).<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 318.

3. The NATO - RM cooperation is destabilizing the situation. An example of this narrative is the research conducted by the Centre for Research and International Journalism within RIA Novosti.<sup>142</sup> The authors present some examples of joint Moldova - NATO projects that are drastically exaggerated. The goal of this research is directed towards spreading confusion among the Republic of Moldova's population about the deepening rift with the Russian Federation and cooperation with NATO.<sup>143</sup> This narrative relates to the security of the Republic of Moldova, which according to the Russian propaganda depends entirely on the Russia Federation.
4. Romania is depicted as a risk and as an appropriator of the Republic of Moldova. Russian media uses Unionism (unification concept between Romania and Republic of Moldova) to promote fear and distrust among the citizens of the country especially among minorities. An example of this narrative is the article in the LiberTV.md calling to organize an action in response to the "Unification March" in March 2016.<sup>144</sup> This narrative is to incite negative attitudes towards Republic of Moldova's strategic partners

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<sup>142</sup> Центр международной журналистики и исследований, "Молдавия: возможности, силы и средства НАТО на территории страны," accessed February 15, 2017, [https://ria.ru/cj\\_mm/20140903/1022575223.html](https://ria.ru/cj_mm/20140903/1022575223.html)

<sup>143</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 318.

<sup>144</sup> Liber TV.md, "Ca răspuns la „Marșul Unirii”, socialiștii organizează un marș „de statalitate” la Comrat,” accessed February 15, 2017, <https://libertv.md/actualitati/ca-raspuns-la-mar-ul-unirii-socialistii-organizeaza-un-mar-ul-de-statalitate-la-comrat>

such as EU countries and the USA. Kremlin propaganda depicts the Republic of Moldova's strategic partners as the sources of worldwide destabilization, which sees the Republic of Moldova as a means of seeking their geopolitical interests.<sup>145</sup>

These narratives are used to make particular "myths," which are utilized to package the Russian Federation's propaganda messages. In 2014, numerous anti-Western myths were presented via the Republic of Moldova's media. More than thirty myths are identified with the EU, which is most probable because of the successful cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. In addition, EU myths concentrate on precisely those areas (e.g. trade with the EU and benefits of visa-free travel) where the Republic of Moldova has had the most success in recent years (Association Agreement, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, visa liberalization).<sup>146</sup>

### Media Techniques

At the NATO summit in Wales on 4 September 2014, General Philip Breedlove, the then military alliance's top commander, declared that the Russian Federation is waging "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare."<sup>147</sup> Over the past several years, Russian Federation

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<sup>145</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 319.

<sup>146</sup> Unimedia.md, "UE demontează miturile despre Acordul de Asociere cu Republica Moldova," accessed February 15, 2017, <http://unimedia.info/stiri/ue-demonteaza-miturile-despre-acordul-de-asociere-cu-republica-moldova-75318.html>

<sup>147</sup> Peter Pomerantsev, "Russia and the Menace of Unreality," accessed February 14, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/>

propaganda has become one of the main subjects of study of various international research organizations.<sup>148</sup> According to Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, the basic characteristics of the Russian Federation propaganda are the following, regardless of the target country:

Russian Federation propaganda is high-volume that is conveyed through a large number of channels.<sup>149</sup> The formats include text, video, audio, and imagery distributed via the internet, social media, satellite television, and traditional radio and television broadcasting.<sup>150</sup> High volume benefits and is relevant in the Russian propaganda context in part because it drowns out competing messages. Second, high volume can overwhelm competing messages in a flood of disagreement. Third, multiple channels increase the chances that target audiences are exposed to the message. Fourth, receiving a message via multiple modes and from multiple sources increases the message's perceived credibility, especially if a disseminating source is one with which an audience member identifies.<sup>151</sup>

Russian Federation propaganda is rapid, continuous, and repetitive.<sup>152</sup> Its propaganda has the agility to be first, which affords the opportunity to create the initial impression. Russian propagandists do not check facts or confirm claims; they simply

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<sup>148</sup> Avalishvili, "Kremlin's Information War against Georgia," 1-2.

<sup>149</sup> Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, "The Russian Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model," *Rand Corporation*, accessed February 25, 2017, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE198/RAND\\_PE198.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE198/RAND_PE198.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid: 2-4.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 4.

disperse an elucidation of events that best supports their subjects and goals. Sometimes the Russian propaganda messages are picked up and rebroadcasted by real news outlets such as RT and Sputnik News. More frequently, social media rehashes the topics and messages that were presented by one of Russia's numerous dissemination channels.<sup>153</sup> In many cases, old misinformation is intentionally circulated anew, in order to ensure that certain issues important to the Kremlin remain relevant.<sup>154</sup>

Russian propaganda makes no commitment to objective reality.<sup>155</sup> Its propaganda is based on manufactured events, distortion of facts or their interpretation, which includes taking facts or events out of context and covering them in a light favorable for the Kremlin. Besides fabricated events, Russian disseminators frequently manufacture sources. For example, Russian news channels, RT and Sputnik News, are more similar to a mix of infotainment and disinformation than truth checked news coverage.<sup>156</sup>

Russian propaganda is not committed to consistency.<sup>157</sup> Its propaganda aims to confuse its recipients by distorting facts, so that they are no longer able to see the real picture amidst the contradictory information. To begin with, various Russian propaganda media do not really communicate precisely the same themes or messages. Second, many

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>154</sup> Avalishvili, "Kremlin's Information War against Georgia," 8.

<sup>155</sup> Paul and Matthews, "The Russian Firehose of Falsehood, Propaganda Model," 5.

<sup>156</sup> Avalishvili, "Kremlin's Information War against Georgia," 8.

<sup>157</sup> Paul and Matthews, "The Russian Firehose of Falsehood, Propaganda Model," 7.

channels do not really communicate a similar record of contested events. Third, different channels demonstrate no dread of “changing their tune.” If a lie or misrepresentation is uncovered or is not welcomed, the disseminators will dispose of it and proceed onward to another clarification.<sup>158</sup> Notwithstanding these general attributes, Kremlin propagandists likewise consider the specifics of the target nation while deciding their thematic directions. Accordingly, the content of Kremlin propaganda fluctuates based on the target nation.

### Special Techniques

Edward Lucas and Peter Pomeranzev argue that the Russian Federation propaganda uses a wide variety of techniques to target its audience in the Republic of Moldova. It adapts its messages to different audiences. It shamelessly seeds disinformation. Its untruths are engaging and sincerely captivating, and fits them into a strategic narrative tailored to match the preconceptions and biases of its main audiences encouraging anti-U.S. and anti-EU sentiment. In order to make this content appealing, Russia is prepared to fabricate stories entirely, using photos and video footage to suit its needs. A full range of media, from cinema to news, talk shows, prints and social media are engaged in promoting the official Russian narratives.<sup>159</sup>

In 2015 and 2016, the Independent Press Association and the Independent Journalism Center conducted surveys to determine the Russian media influence in the Republic of Moldova. As the result, it was identified that several Russian TV channels

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<sup>158</sup> Avalishvili, “Kremlin’s Information War against Georgia,” 8.

<sup>159</sup> Lucas and Pomeranzev, “Winning the Information War,” 25.

and journalistic materials deviated from ethical standards (public trust, truthfulness, fairness, integrity, independence and accountability) and used elements of propaganda and information manipulation practices. Both organizations qualified these deviations as special techniques for handling information and spreading disinformation among the population.<sup>160</sup> The special techniques identified by the two NGOs were:

Selecting video and audio recordings - these techniques were used to have a positive reflection on some groups and a negative one on others. There had been situations where different images were used in order to amplify the negative essence of the message sent by Russian TV channels. Such situations have been identified in media materials from Prime TV and sputnik.md.<sup>161</sup>

Denial, concealment, and interpretation of the facts are techniques Russian media uses to send the propaganda messages to the target audience. The information is selected and truncated with a purpose to influence. Also, some journalists inaccurately quote sources, to distort its propaganda messages. RTR, sputnik.md, REN TV use these techniques in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>162</sup> Iulian Chifu and Oazu Nantoi argue that Russian media does not want to send correct information to the public. It sends only the formation of an attitude pursued by the news source (Russian TV channels). The special

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<sup>160</sup> Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent, "Elemente de propagandă, manipulare informațională și încălcare a normelor deontologiei jurnalistice în spațiul mediatic autohton," *Raport de monitorizare*, May 2016, accessed March 24, 2017, [http://mediacritica.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Raport\\_trimestrial\\_de\\_monitorizare\\_CJI.pdf](http://mediacritica.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Raport_trimestrial_de_monitorizare_CJI.pdf).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 4-8.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 4-6.



techniques are used to artificially amplify and share their particular point in order to discredit the West or promote Russian interests in the region.<sup>163</sup>

### Effects and Evaluation

The Russian Federation's propaganda is a complex system, both with regard to ideas and institutions. Carried out both directly and through proxies, it shapes the perceptions of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova about the benefits for EU integration. In achieving its goals, Russian Federation messaging has proven quite effective, if not necessarily consistent. While often crude and misleading as far as substance, its delivery is refined, directed, tailored to various target audiences, and able to exploit the Republic of Moldova's weaknesses such as the division of the society in supporters of the pro-EU and pro-Russian political parties.

As a result, of the EU integration process, the Republic of Moldova's population benefits in several areas. The political and legal (rule of law and human rights), economic (one of the biggest and secured market are in the world, free trade and non-tariff barriers, energy security, economies development funds, and EU investments), labor and free movement of people across the EU, environmental and consumer are the areas where the Republic of Moldova benefited the most. Despite all of the above benefits, the support for the EU integration of the Republic of Moldova among its population is declining. According to the latest public opinion polls conducted by the International Republic Institute (IRI), the number of Republic of Moldova's population who believe that the Republic of Moldova would benefit more from EU integration declined from 64 percent

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<sup>163</sup> Chifu and Nantoi, 355.

in 2011 to 38 percent in October 2016 (see. Figure 3). Instead, the population who opposes the integration of the country into the EU increased from 15 percent in 2011 to 37 percent in 2016.

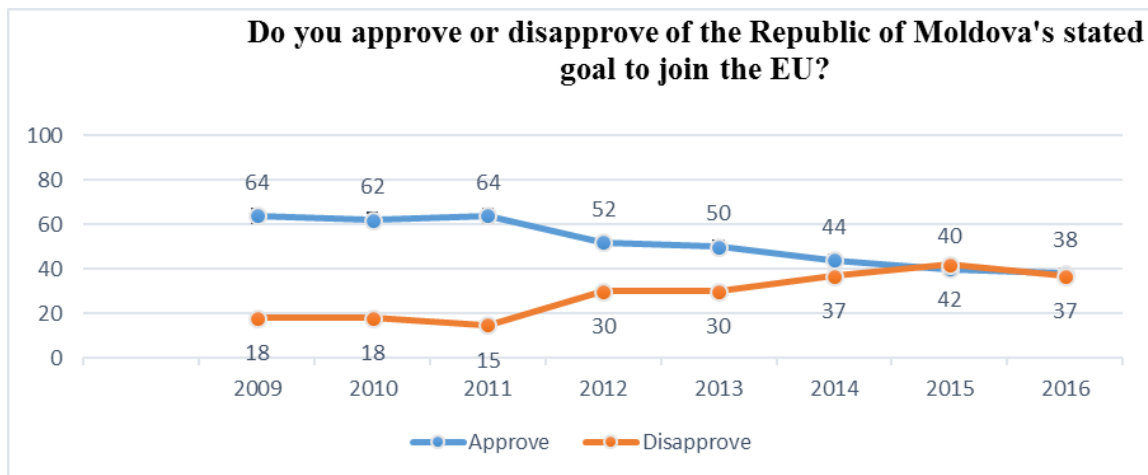


Figure 3. The Republic of Moldova's public attitude toward joining EU

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice, octombrie 2016,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>.

Since 1991, the Russian Federation has constantly pressured the Republic of Moldova’s government. This is done to keep Moldova in the Russian Federation’s sphere of influence. This pressure affects the Moldovan population despite ethnic, language, and political preferences (pro-EU or pro- Russian Federation). First, every day the Republic of Moldova’s population feel the effects of the Russian Federation economic embargo (2014). It has affected the entire Moldovan economy, and as a result, the prices and inflation are rising. In addition, the Republic of Moldova is paying a very high price for Russian gas one of the highest price among European and Asian countries. At the same

time, the number of the people who believe that the Republic of Moldova would benefit from integration of the country into to EEU increased from 2014 by 8 percent (Figure 4).

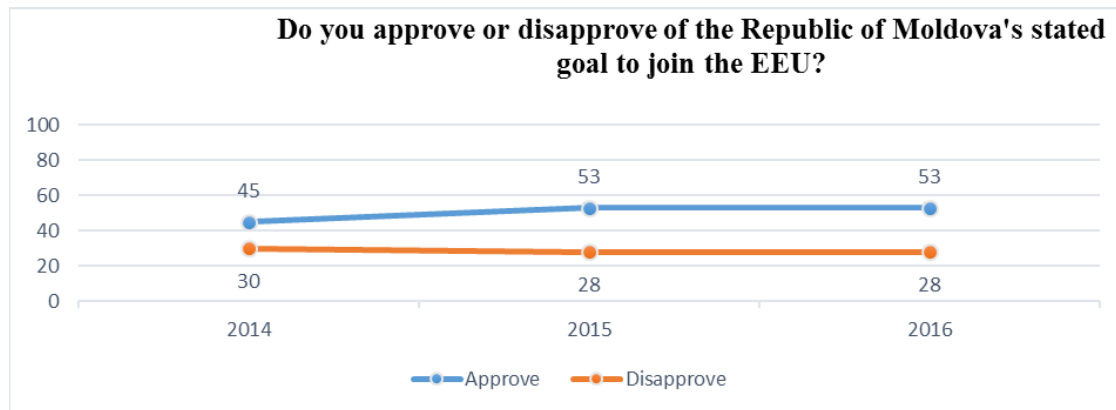


Figure 4. The Republic of Moldova's public attitude toward joining EEU

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice, octombrie 2016,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>.

Secondly, the Russian Federation ignores the Republic of Moldova integrity and sovereignty. This started in 1992, when the Russian Army backed Transnistrians separatist Army against the Republic of Moldova where hundreds of people were killed and thousands were displaced. For more than 25 years, the Russian Federation has ignored the Republic of Moldova and other organizations requests (UN, OSCE) to remove its Army form Transnistria territory. Presently, the Russian Federation trains the Transnistrian Army. Moreover, they regularly conduct different military exercises ignoring any claims from Moldova's side. However, according to the last public polls, the population supports neutrality as the best security option for the Republic of Moldova (Figure 5).

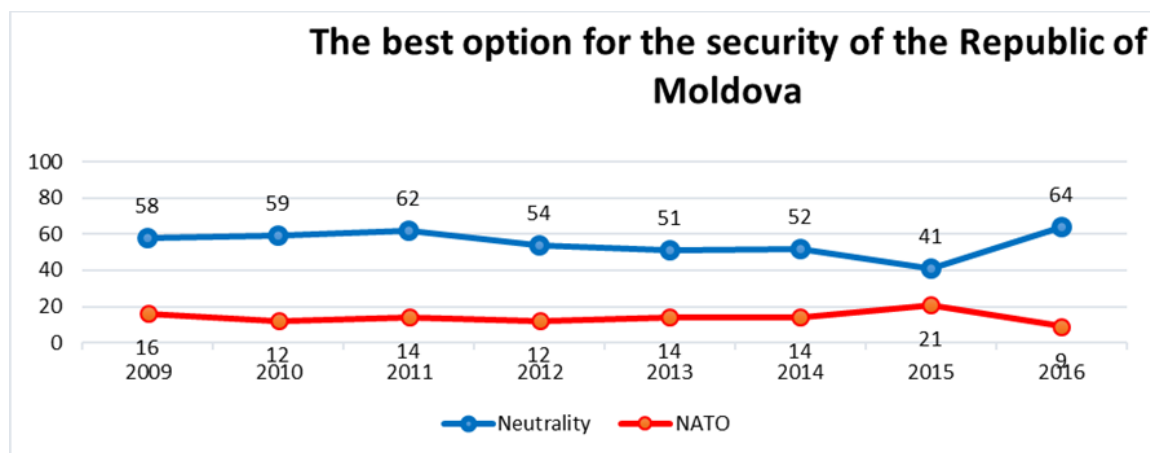


Figure 5. The best security option for the Republic of Moldova

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice, octombrie 2016,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>.

In the last 10 years, Republic of Moldova benefited from cooperation with NATO via IPAP. NATO supports the country’s reform efforts and provides expertise in building the Republic of Moldova defense and security capabilities. In addition, NATO provides opportunities for the Republic of Moldova to engage in different education, training, and interoperability programs. As a result, the training, education and evaluation processes are carried out in accordance with the Republic of Moldova’s National Army mission and Euro-Atlantic standards. However, the 2016 polls show that only 9 percent of the population supports NATO membership compared to almost 57 percent who are opposing (Figure 6).

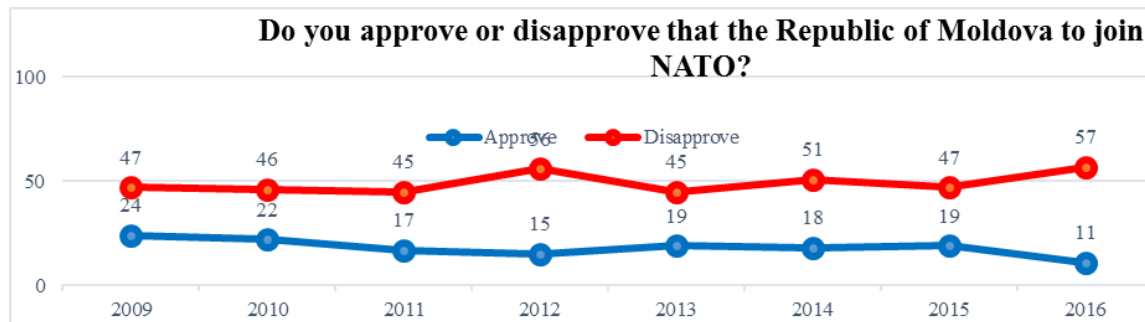


Figure 6. The Republic of Moldova's public attitude toward joining NATO

*Source:* Institutul de Politici Publice, “Barometrul Opiniei Publice, octombrie 2016,” accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=804>.

Officially, EU integration and cooperation with NATO is the SSP of the Republic of Moldova. In this context, by influencing public opinion in the Republic of Moldova, Russian propaganda influences decision makers in the country and establishes a public agenda in Russia’s security and defense interests. The 2016 public polls proves this argument.

### Conclusion

Since 2009, the Republic of Moldova’s SSP has been to integrate with the EU and work in close cooperation with NATO. The Russian Federation considers the Republic of Moldova part of its sphere of influence. Moldova’s current SSP runs counters to Russian Federation interests. To deny the Republic of Moldova’s EU integration and cooperation with NATO, the Russian Federation is using all of its instruments of national power. Propaganda as an informational element is what the Russian Federation uses for accomplishing its political objectives. The Russian propaganda objectives are disrupting the EU integration of the country through instigating anti - Western sentiments,

popularizing its official policy and ingraining confusion, fear and hatred among its population by proliferating suspicious ideas, misleading statements and false information. The Russian propaganda tools are media outlets, NGOs, the Orthodox Church and political parties that the Russian Federation uses to carry its messages to the target audiences. Its target audience are the youth, Soviet nostalgic people and Russian's compatriots. The last category is the largest and is composed of Russian ethnics; Russian language speakers and the simple pro-Russian people in the Republic of Moldova. According to the October 2016 public polls, the public support for the country's EU integration and cooperation with NATO dropped dramatically and registered the lowest point since 2009. This demonstrates that the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova is very effective. If the current coalition will not intervene to mitigate the influence of the foreign propaganda, the SSP of the Republic of Moldova can be changed during the Republic of Moldova's parliamentary elections in 2018.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of the paper is to determine how the Russian Federation uses the informational instrument of national power to influence the Republic of Moldova's SSP. This chapter briefly summarizes the findings of the research. It also analyzes what those results mean and what the implications of these results are. Subsequently this chapter describes the recommendations for further study, with a final conclusion.

The main findings from the previous chapter indicate that since 2009 the Republic of Moldova's SSP is integration into EU and cooperation with NATO. Moldova's SSP is against the Russian Federation interests in the region. Russia considers the ex-Soviet countries part of its near abroad and views them integrated into the EEU (led by Russian Federation). To deny Moldova to join EU and cooperate with NATO the Russian Federation uses propaganda.

The short answers to the secondary research questions are:

1. What are the objectives of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova? The objectives of Russian propaganda in Moldova are to disrupt the EU integration, instigate anti-Western sentiments, and popularize its official policy and ingrain confusion, fear, and hatred among the population of the Republic of Moldova by proliferating suspicious ideas, misleading statements and false information. In this regard, it distinguishes a political lobbying and media campaign targeted to accomplish propaganda's objectives. By influencing public opinion of the Republic of Moldova,

Russian propaganda attempts to influence the GORM. Also, it uses propaganda to promote and consolidate the Russian compatriots and orthodox religion in the Republic of Moldova, which is part of its foreign policy.

2. What assets are the Russian Federation using to meet its objectives regarding propaganda? Russian propaganda uses media outlets, NGOs, the Orthodox Church and political parties to disseminate its messages and narratives to its target audience in Moldova. Media is the most effective tool that aggressively promotes Russian's interests through its Russian information channels. Russian TV programs and newspapers are easily assimilated in Moldova because of known language, terms, interactive manner, and clear messages sent via news, movies, and entertainment. Because of intense propaganda, it is difficult to verify what a particular official, expert, news, movie or entertainment messages really were.
3. Who is the Russian Federation targeting with propaganda? The Russian propaganda targets three main groups in Moldova: the youth, the Soviet nostalgic and the Russian compatriots/ sympathizers. These audiences are willing to believe different rumors and messages being spread via Russian language media. Rumor dissemination is one of the most effective techniques of propaganda because it can create fear, hatred, or ill-founded hope to be materialized in real life actions. On social media platforms, pro-Russian voices have systematically cultivated fear, anxiety, and hatred among Russians compatriots and its supporters.



4. What media and special techniques are the Russian Federation using to disseminate propaganda? Different media and special techniques are used to maximize the effect of the Russian Federation's propaganda messages including visual symbols of power, music, and arousal of emotions. In order to make the propaganda content appealing, the Government of Russia is prepared to fabricate stories entirely, using photos and video footage to suit its needs. A full range of media, from cinema to news, talk shows, prints and social media are engaged in promoting the official Russian narratives in Moldova.
5. What are the effects of the Russian Federation's propaganda on the Republic of Moldova's strategic security policy? The effects of the Russian Federation's propaganda in the Republic of Moldova can only be evaluated from a short-term perspective. The October 2016 public opinion polls prove that Russian propaganda is effective in influencing the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

Russian propaganda strategic implications on the Republic of Moldova's SSP are the following:

1. The political parties in the Moldova's parliament have different views on the SSP of the country;
2. Moldova's SSP is not supported by an alignment of institutional communication visions and messages (EU integration, cooperation with NATO, security options);

3. The skepticism among the population about the future of the Republic of Moldova's EU integration and increased support for EEU integration of the country;
4. The lack of public support for the Republic of Moldova - NATO relationship;
5. The defense and security topics are barely found in public speeches of policy makers;

These implications are aggravated by the lack of national unity and social cohesion in Moldova. Moreover, Moldova's population is confused and misinformed due to the Russia's active propaganda. The lack of anti-propaganda measures and cohesive messages about the EU integration and cooperation with NATO could weakened more the confidence of the people in public institutions. This could end in the future with a new and pro-Est SSP.

### Recommendations

1. Russia's propaganda poses a threat to the Republic of Moldova and disrupts the country's democratic development. Because of this, Russian propaganda must be officially recognized as a threat to the Republic of Moldova's national security and should be listed as such in its official documents. In addition, it is necessary to develop a new strategy in the field of Security and Defense Information and Communication. Strategic communication should be the interface between the National Security Strategy and action.

2. The Republic of Moldova's government must develop a unified strategy for countering the Russian Federation's propaganda. The strategy must incorporate a detailed problem describing Russian propaganda, and the government's methods to counter it.

Based on this strategy, the government must develop an action plan, which will specify the state institutions that will be responsible for coordinating relevant efforts. The plan needs to consolidate the dynamic cooperation between government, EU Information Center, media, Moldova's Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (CCA), civil society and different NGOs.

3. The Republic of Moldova's Security and Information Service (SIS) must include anti-propaganda activities among its priorities. It needs to publish annual reports on the Russian Federation's information operations along with any others in Moldova to inform the public of the threat propaganda poses. For this purpose, the SIS could share the experience of other countries such as the Baltic countries, Georgia, and Romania that are successful in mitigating the influence of the Russian propaganda.

4. The Republic of Moldova's government must establish a disinformation analysis, and a response and anti-propaganda coordination group. Like the EU's EastStratCom team, the Republic of Moldova needs to have a state institution that will uncover the sources of propaganda via research and analysis, in cooperation with international partners, civil society, research institutions and journalists, and provide this information to the public through different channels of communication.

5. A common understanding on the importance of strategic communication helps avoid information manipulation. It is necessary that the Republic of Moldova's public institutions improve their communication with civil society through public information campaigns. Moldovan public officials must take an active role in combating Russian propaganda. Members of the ruling coalition (at the legislative and local government levels) should abstain from making contradictory statements and must send unified

messages about Moldova's SSP and its plans towards mitigating the influence of the external propaganda. Thus, everything depends on the communication process: if the information is explained better citizens will understand the message as intended. If Moldova's authorities will not communicate and explain to the civil society the benefits from the integrating with the EU and cooperation with NATO the population could become the victim of misinformation and propaganda.

6. Standards of financial transparency must be set up for NGOs. Lack of financial transparency in NGOs is a perfect environment for the Russian Federation to conduct its propaganda.

7. The local media and civil society need to interact with public institutions. The Republic of Moldova's government must launch different programs to support the development of local media and civil society in the Transnistria, Gagauzia, and other regions populated by ethnic minorities.

8. The Republic of Moldova's CCA must take the lead in countering disinformation. It should monitor information communicated to the public. Also, it must provide monitoring results and media analysis to state institutions and civil society.

#### Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

This qualitative study aimed to examine how the Russian Federation uses propaganda to influence the Republic of Moldova's SSP. The scope of the research was limited and it covers the period since 2009. Limitations of this research included the recent Russian Federation's propaganda campaign completion and discovery. Even though the Russian Federation's propaganda is quite successful, it was not possible to judge its long-term effects. The methodology was another factor, which limited the

research. It provided an overview of the Russian Federation's propaganda campaign, but it did not measure or quantify the aspects of the research. Jowett and O'Donnell framework provided the tools to accomplish the research. This framework can be applied to the Republic of Moldova's counterpropaganda to provide a different perspective to the situation. The strong point of the Jowett and O'Donnell framework is that it allows researching a propaganda campaign that is still in progress. Without a doubt, in time, more information about the Russian propaganda will become available and its effects will be better known.

There are some findings throughout the paper, which require further study.

1. The ability of the Republic of Moldova's government to mitigate the Russian Federation's propaganda influence. Given its geographic location, history, different ethnicities, economic level, and regional security environment can the Republic of Moldova mitigate the Russian Federation's propaganda influence in its territory?
2. The Russian Federation president and officials are sending the message that the Republic of Moldova is part of its sphere of influence. This means that the Russian Federation will continue to apply pressure on Chisinau's government via its instruments of national power until its goals are achieved. In this situation, how will the Republic of Moldova mitigate the Russian Federation's propaganda influence in the Republic of Moldova?

### Conclusion

The Russian Federation is conducting an extensive and multifaceted policy, aiming to re-orient its SSP from a pro-European to a pro-Russian direction. Propaganda is

one of the Russian Federation's tools to influence the Moldovan public to force a change in the Republic of Moldova's SSP.

The propaganda constitutes a threat to the Republic of Moldova's national security and its democratic development. The Kremlin's propaganda disrupts the Republic of Moldova's EU integration and cooperation with NATO. In addition, it discredits Western values, institutions and the Republic of Moldova partner states. It undermines public trust in government and political institutions, incites ethnic and religious conflict, and promotes xenophobia and hatred.

The Russian Federation's propaganda network distributors are wide, interconnected and very effective. It includes traditional media outlets, internet and social media, NGOs, the Church, and pro-Russian political parties in the Republic of Moldova. So far, the Republic of Moldova's government has given little credit to Russian's propaganda threat and has not taken effective countermeasures to mitigate its influence. The countermeasures that were taken were not designed to specifically to meet the danger and challenges presented by the Russian Federation's propaganda.

Since the intensification of the Russian Federation's propaganda in 2013, the Republic of Moldova's public support towards its EU integration and cooperation with NATO has been steadily declining. Moreover, the October 2016 public opinions polls show a radical increase of the public support towards the Republic of Moldova-EU integration, which is totally opposite from official strategic security of the country. The Russian Federation has already influenced the Republic of Moldova's political agenda and can have more effects on the upcoming 2018 parliamentary elections.

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